

男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をして  
いるけれど、年下のクラスメイトで声優の女の子に  
首を絞められている。Ⅲ -Time to Pray-

—女子高校生で新人声優をしています  
が、年上のクラスメイトで売れっ子ライ  
トノベル作家の男子の首を絞めています。  
—男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル  
作家をしているけれど、年下のクラスメ  
イトで声優の女の子に首を絞められてい  
る。  
—女子高校生でライトノベル好きを自  
負しているけれど、年上のクラスメイ  
トが朗読した『ヴァイス・ヴァーサ』の  
Web小説版の存在が気になっています。

高校生作家と新人声優の秘密の関係に  
『ヴァイス・ヴァーサ』ファンの少女が  
乱入し、ラブコメモードに突入!? 時雨  
沢恵一、新シリーズ第三弾!



し-8-44



男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をして  
いるけれど、年下のクラスメイトで声優の女の子に  
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時雨沢恵一



電撃文庫



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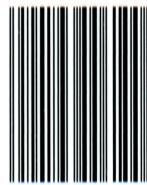
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しぐさわかれいち  
時雨沢恵一

お気づきの人も多いかと思いますが、このシリーズ  
は発売年である2014年のカレンダーを使っています。  
当然、執筆中は未来のことだったので、発売前に超巨  
大鑽石で東京とか日本とか地球とか太陽系とか滅んで  
いたら内容変更とか本気で心配した。ほっ。

【電撃文庫作品】

キノの旅Ⅰ～ⅩⅦ the Beautiful World

学園キノ①～③

アリソンⅠ～Ⅲ(上/下)

リアとレイズⅠ～Ⅶ

メガとセロンⅠ～Ⅲ

一つの大陸の物語(上/下) ～アークとレイズとメガとセロンと～  
男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をしているけれど、年下のクラス  
メイトで声優の女の子に首を絞められている。Ⅰ -Time to Pray- (上)  
男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をしているけれど、年下のクラス  
メイトで声優の女の子に首を絞められている。Ⅱ -Time to Pray- (下)  
男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をしているけれど、年下のクラス  
メイトで声優の女の子に首を絞められている。Ⅲ -Time to Pray-

くろはしこうじ  
イラスト:黒星紅白

電動アシスト付き自転車を買いました。坂でもらくらく進め  
るので、すこし遠出が出来るようになりました。これで私も  
一歩「旅人」に近づいたんじゃないかな。自転車とも話しし  
てるし。

# Novel Illustrations

ヴァイス・ヴァーサⅢ  
～戦場の兄妹～

日本での騒動が一段落したのも束の間、再び剣と魔法の異世界《レピュタシオン》に飛ばされてしまった操闘員。  
不死の体で、血なまぐさい戦場の世界を過ごす皮肉な状況に、彼の心は徐々に触まれていく……。不安を抱えつつも、世界の安定のため乱世統一を目指すシンに協力する真だったが、そんな折、シンの妹・エマが真に告げるのだった……。  
「どうか、兄を殺してください」と――。  
一国の主となった兄と、王位継承権第一位の妹。唯一の肉親として仲睦まじく見える二人に、いったい何が――!?  
真実へと近づいていく真は、戦場の兄妹の絆を知ることになる。  
人気シリーズ第三巻が早くも登場！  
同じ顔を持つ二人の物語は再び異世界へ！



あ-10-がきよ!

電撃文庫  
あ-10-がきよ!  
電撃文庫  
あ-10-がきよ!

あ-10-がきよ!  
電撃文庫  
あ-10-がきよ!



× × × × ×  
三巻が出てしまいました。賛歌を歌いたいです。この文章、今までがんばって韻を踏んでききましたが、そろそろ「よく分からないギャグを載っている」とまわれそうなので、次巻からは普通にやります。普通の著者紹介文がはんだか、まだ分かりませんが。

【電撃文庫作品】  
ヴァイス・ヴァーサ  
ヴァイス・ヴァーサⅡ  
～同じ顔の連盛者～  
ヴァイス・ヴァーサⅢ  
～戦場の兄妹～

イラスト：○○○○○  
都内在住。東京から出ることは、ほとんどありません。コ：  
ツ好き猫好き。新しいお仕事。一生懸命がんばります。  
<http://XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX/>



男子高校生で売れっ子ライトノベル作家をしているけれど、  
年下のクラスメイトで声優の女の子に首を絞められている。

# III

—Time to Pray—

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え！先生に言うて分かりますか？

いいからとりあえず言ってみろ

「結構いろいろ好きで、電撃文庫なら今のイチャ

ンはやっぱり」

ああもう、答えは分かっている

「ウァススアーリ」ですね？

やっぱりね

作者としてはとても嬉しいんだけど、僕としては

とても喜ばない

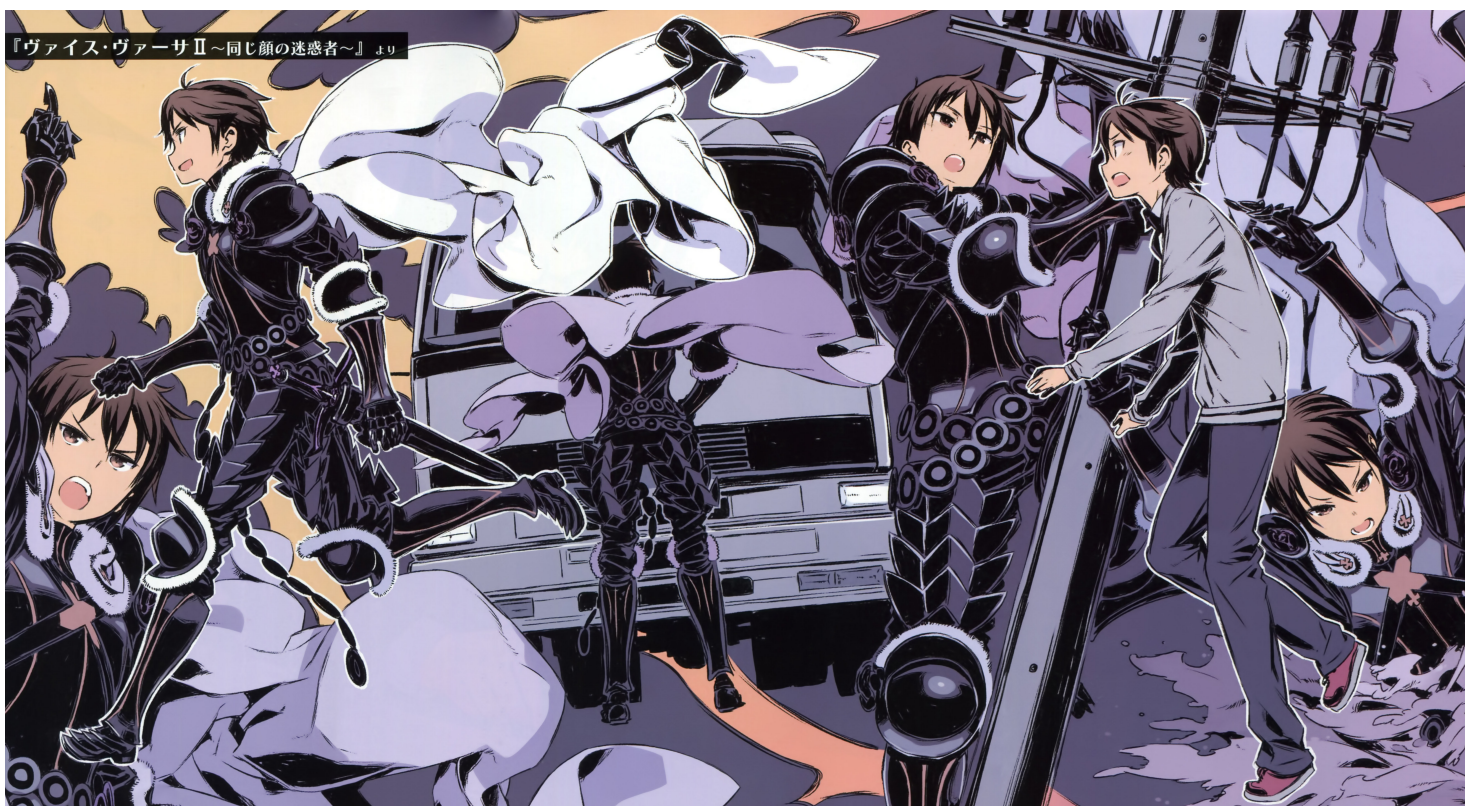
折っていた書類がすれたので、僕は一度開いてや

り直した

そんな僕の間では、高速書籍折り曲げマシー

ンのようになった似鳥が、反復動作を無表情で繰

り返していた



# Prologue

Those cold hands

Feel

Really good.

My head

Feels a lot

Clearer

I wake up.

Ahh,

What I see in front of me,

I see them all very clearly.

I see them all very clearly.

I see them all very clearly.

What happened?

Why did things end up like this?

I,

Always remembered it well.



Remembered it well.

Remembered it well.

Always,

Remembered it well.

I couldn't forget.

I'll probably

Never forget about this,

In my entire life.

# Chapter 1-1 - May 22, I touched her II

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, strangled by my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress.

This is my current predicament.

I'm lying on the soft bed. This bed's mattress is really bouncy, nice to sleep on.

My classmate, a voice actress who's a year younger than me--

In other words, Eri Nitadori, or Stella Hamilton, is on my body.

She, dressed in a  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeve shirt, reached her hands out for my neck. The slender fingers on her hands were wrapping around my carotid pulse, clamping them from the sides.

Her hands are really cold.

I feel that I have a muffler made of chains wrapped around my neck.

In my vision, I can see her head.

The faint brown hair is short, unable to cover the sides of her face. The hair's pretty and thin, and looks really clear.

Thus, even with the backlight on her, I could clearly see her face. The large eyes are dichromatic. The right eye's a faint grey, and the left's brown.

At this point, there's no need to mention it, but I think she's pretty.

And her cold hands really feel comfortable.

It's probably because this room's a little too hot, so hot that I'm spacing out, which is why it feels very comfortable.

Ahh.

I really want to keep it this way.

How did it end up this way?

I start to recollect the events that transpired.

May 22nd, Thursday.

I took the Limited Express to Tokyo. In this wonderful weather--

The train proceeded smoothly.

I'm a professional author.

I wrote a novel titled 'Vice Versa'--

Currently, it's lined in the Pocket Book (Bunko) section of the bookstore.

My work is classified as a 'light novel', released by a publisher called Dengeki Bunko.

I debuted two years ago, in August, back when I was in my first year of high school. Currently, the series is published till the 9th volume. After taking a year away from school, I started going to school again, and I'm in my second year of high school.

Delightfully, 'Vice Versa' is selling well, and the decision was made to adapt it into a TV anime that's to be aired in July.

The After Record of the anime, in other words, the recording of the voice actors' work began at the beginning of April. To attend the recording session every Friday morning at 10 A.M., I would take the Limited Express to Tokyo every Thursday evening..

I was seated at the last row of the free seating carriage, to the left.

Eri Nitadori, the girl with long black hair and faint blue glasses, was seated at my right.

She's asleep.

Eri Nitadori is--



My classmate, seated right behind me in the classroom, a year younger than me, who took leave from school for a year.

At the same time, she's a colleague. She's a rising voice actress, voicing the character Meek in the anime 'Vice Versa'.

Since the second week of the After Record, she learned that we took the same train ride to Tokyo, and if there was anything to talk, we would keep it to the train. We would avoid talking to each other at the recording studio and the school, to avoid revealing our identities and relationship.

Till last week, she would ask all kinds of questions about my work as an author, and I answered obediently. I just needed to ask, so I felt at ease having a conversation. Typically, if someone were to ask me to chat with a girl, I guess I'll probably slip away.

A major case happened last week...or I should say, an incident, but I guess I barely managed to settle it. Even I felt that I worked hard, kinda.

It was less than 10 minutes since the train left the station.

During these few minutes, Nitadori and I boldly argued over the potato chips flavor, and we showed our tickets to Miss Conductor, whom we caused lots of trouble to the prior week.

After a rather short conversation, and during the few seconds of me seriously pondering the idea of 'I hope to have Nitadori as the protagonist of a novel one day'.

Nitadori fell asleep.

Her head rests on my shoulder before I knew it, and the weight on my shoulder doesn't feel too light or heavy.

I guess she deliberately added some perfume since her wig's giving off a fragrance--maybe that's what I'll call it. That black hair's very close to me. Her closed eyes are so close to me, it seems like they're able to feel my breathing. I

can clearly see her long eyelashes, white skin and red lips.

I don't know what I should do.

I don't want to wake her up when she's sleeping so soundly, but if she's going to continue leaning on me, I think I'm going to have some bad imaginations. So this is inappropriate. Really inappropriate.

Even without this happening, that action of hers is almost equivalent to kissing my cheek, and I'm already unable to calm down.

Can I hang on for another 2 hours with such repressed feelings? No, I can't.

But I feel that I can't do something inhumane like saying 'don't sleep with your head tilted' and push Nitadori back.

And furthermore, if that causes Nitadori's wig to fall, I'll be more flustered before, so much that I want to jump out from the train.

It's troublesome.

Really troublesome.

Right when I'm panicking inside and not moving at all.

"Please let her sleep."

I hear a soft voice diagonally above me. The hushed voice barely made it through the noise of the train.

I turned my eyes towards the aisle, and found that it was Miss Kamishiro.

She appears to be about 27 years old, has short black hair, sharp eyes, and looks strong.

Whenever Nitadori heads to the capital, she'll come along, so I get the feeling that the latter is Nitadori's bodyguard.

Before I know it, Miss Kamishiro got up from the seat on the right end of the row I told her to sit at when she got onto the train.

"Use this."





She hushes her voice, and hands something over to me.

To avoid shaking Nitadori's head, I receive it with my left hand.

With my hand, I receive an earphone, and a black object that's as thick and large as a 100 Yen coin, connected to a cord that's about 30cm long--what are these?

"This is a microphone, sensei."

Miss Kamishiro told me. I wonder if she could read minds, or that she read my thoughts because my expression was so spaced out, or both.

Miss Kamishiro said it so nonchalantly, but I never thought this person would call me 'sensei' too.

I guess she already knew of my actual name and pen names from Nitadori. But I didn't really hate that title, so I didn't refute.

"Please attach the cable I'm going to give you to the earphone, and then put it onto the left ear. Also, please hold down the microphone to the side of the throat."

Miss Kamishiro continues to explain with a flat, calm tone, and sits down in front of me, before turning behind to hand the cable, which I received.

There's a little tip at the end of the cable. *I see* thinking that, I attach the cable to the earphone, and put the earphone at my left ear.

Even this dull-witted me can tell what Miss Kamishiro wants to do.

She wants to talk to me while keeping it a secret from Nitadori. Does she always carry this thing along? Or is it that she only does so today? I don't know.

**"Can you hear me?"**

I can hear some little noise with Miss Kamishiro's voice. The voice's vague as compared to hearing it directly, but I can still hear her words well enough.

With my hand hand on the microphone, I press it down to the left side of my throat, and press the switch in the middle, trying to speak, **"Ah, yes. I can hear you."**

I spoke in a voice so soft, no bystander can hear me.

**"Yes, it looks fine."**

Miss Kamishiro answered. It seems that she's able to hear me.

This little thing is called a 'throat microphone', able to sense the vibrations of the throat, and can be used even in noisy situations. I know the existence and name of it, but it's the first time I'm using the real thing.

Speaking of which, I remember a certain anime about high school girls driving tanks, and the girls would press on their throats whenever they speak.

It's really useful, and I'm impressed. While I have some knowledge, actually experiencing it is a different feeling.

It's a good experience, and next time, I want the device to show up in 'Side Sin'.

I feel that if Sin's going to commit a robbery in modern Japan, he'll use the money he gets to buy entire wireless communications sets back to Reputation.

In that world, there are magic spells that work like directional speakers to convey voices to specific people. If there are such devices however, anyone can use those devices even without that kind of magic or training.

No, I guess this kind works better if prepared and used by Shin. The plot will proceed this way; Shin will ask his mom to buy him a complete wireless communicator set as a birthday gift, and after setting it up, he'll contribute greatly in Reputation.

In Reputation, the outstanding magicians are able to cast spells faster than the others, and able to sense magic from further away. With such a device, there won't be any presence left behind, and can be used to trick them.

My delusions progress to such a point at that moment, and I intend to record the idea into my smartphone.

**"Now then--"**

But Miss Kamishiro won't allow me the time to do so.

**"I have something to say."**

Yes, I understood that.

I look out of the window at the flowing scenery, and while mindful of Nitadori's head on my right shoulder, I quietly listen, **"Do you hear me? --I can't observe your face now, so please keep your answers brief if you have to."**

Hearing the poised voice by Miss Kamishiro, I hastily answer.

**"Yes...I'm sorry. I'll answer--but before this, may I ask a question?"**

I'm tense, but I end up saying what I want to ask.

**"What is it?"**

**"Well...erm, I only know your last name, Miss Kamishiro. Regarding your relationship with Nitadori...Miss Nitadori, I think I have a rough idea as to what it is. But it'll be bad if I'm wrong here"**

I stammered.

**"Understood. In any case, I have yet to introduce myself. I do apologize for that. Now then, let us begin from here."**

And so, Miss Kamishiro told me a lot of things, while I merely answered from time to time as I listened.

Miss Kamishiro's full name is Akane Kamishiro, legend for Kamishiro, and red for Akane.

The name sounds cool, like a female protagonist in a combat fiction.

I really want to use this name for a character in a certain story, but now's not the time, so I pass on seeking her approval.

Also, she even told me her age without me asking. Shocking, she's already 35. Looking at her strong appearance, I thought she would be younger, about 27 or 28. I then state this to her.

**"Oh? Thanks."**

Only at this moment does she answer with a kind voice. Only at this moment.

And as I expected, Miss Kamishiro's the personal bodyguard to Eri Nitadori. She has been accompanying Nitadori ever since the latter lived overseas, and it has been over 5 years.



To avoid abduction overseas, it's necessary to have a bodyguard and a chauffeur. Thus, she has been fetching and sending Nitadori off in place of the latter's parents. Miss 'Kamishiro' takes the 'place' of the parents, and I found it cool.

It's said that she didn't need to do that much in Japan, given the good security. However, whenever Nitadori had to spend her nights outside, she would accompany, or in other words, 'watch over'.

Thus, as I had expected, she would accompany Nitadori to Tokyo, participating in the After Record.

That was also the case when I first met and spoke with Nitadori on the train, April 10th.

Both of them had green rail passes (TN: In other words, first class rides on the green car). After that, Miss Kamishiro and Nitadori would arrive at the station together, and be seated at the front seats of the same carriage.

At the end of this very long self-introduction, Miss Kamishiro spoke with a really displeased tone, **"But letting her slip from my sight last week was my fault...this will be the biggest failure in my life."**

Even though I couldn't see her, she's definitely baring her fangs. If I saw her, I'll be utterly terrified. Good thing I couldn't.

The train continues to move forward, stopping at many stations.

It passes through a long, long tunnel, slowly slipping into a station by a lake. The number of passengers increased, but nobody sat beside Miss Kamishiro.

Nitadori maintains the same pose throughout, sleeping on my shoulder.

I turn to my right, looking at her sleeping face. Nitadori's really sleeping nicely.

**"Milady...hasn't been sleeping well recently."**

Miss Kamishiro says.

I turn my eyes forward again, and see Miss Kamishiro seated normally,

looking forward. I'm guessing that she has a pair of eyes on the back of her head.

**"I see..."**

I press my hand on my throat, answering,

And Miss Kamishiro continues to explain with a poised voice, as though reporting the events happening on this world.

**"Milady felt guilty for doing such a thing."**

I answer,

**"Well...same here."**

Since I killed off Meek so easily.

But I feel Miss Kamishiro's probably unable to understand these words.

**"I too feel that such a plot development is really terrifying."**

Miss Kamishiro simply answered. She's scary.

**"But most importantly, Milady didn't feel that way. She's often regretful about the fact that she tried to kill you, sensei."**

**"..."**

I couldn't say anything. Then, Miss Kamishiro continues to talk,

**"I have just heard of what happened to you two at school. You changed the future plot progression, hinting that the character Milady voices will return, have her owe the favor, and then--"**

Miss Kamishiro pauses for a while.

**"You remember her name, and the matter of her sending you a fan letter."**

That was because I could never forget, and I'll never be able to forget.

**"I guess, Stella Hamilton--is her actual name after all."**

**"Yes..."**

Her reply proves that my guesses are correct. Great.

**"But she has intended to hide everything in school. I hope that you'll help. "**

My secrets aren't divulged, so she's likely to blackmail me, but she chooses to spare me.

Nodding, I clearly state,

**"I'll guard this secret with my all. I won't talk to her again in school, just in case, to prevent it from being revealed"**

Then, I ask Miss Kamishiro,

**"Miss Kamishiro, you know that Nitadori once sent me a letter, and I replied, right?"**

I ask this just in case. If not, she wouldn't be mentioning about 'me remembering the name'.

**"Yes."**

She simply answers.

This alone allows me to understand how much Nitadori trusts Miss Kamishiro.

In other words, Nitadori's about to honestly say how she once thought about killing herself, and unable to talk to her parents about this.

**"Milady was really happy. If not for that incident...I guess I'll be driving down the expressway instead."**

Miss Kamishiro says.

I don't know if 'that incident' here refers to the changing of the plot, or that I called her Stella, or both--

In any case, if I did anything wrong, Nitadori wouldn't be taking this train, and I probably will never have the chance to talk to her again.

I heave a sigh of relief, really earnestly.

And then, I say to Miss Kamishiro,

**"Good thing I have the chance to talk. This is a god-given opportunity."**

**"Sensei, do you believe in god?"**

Miss Kamishiro asks with a slightly incredulous tone,

I immediately answer,

**"No, not at all."**

**"...Well, let us not talk about that."**

She choose not to talk about that, and I decide to say what's on my mind. If not now, then when? I have to thank her.

**"Miss Kamishiro, I really have to thank you."**

**"Huh? --What are you saying?"**

She answers in surprise, and I continue,

**"What happened last week, in the infirmary, well, I'm really grateful for you going along with that unreasonable, impromptu act. I haven't thanked you for that."**

**"Ahh...you don't have to. I just did what was the best option I could take back then."**

Miss Kamishiro coldly replies, and then continues,

**"But to be honest...I'm really impressed. I never thought you could come up with that plan in such a situation. Or I should say that you're a sensei capable of creating something on the fly?"**

Ahh, I'm glad to be praised.

**"Thanks...for the praise."**

And to hide my embarrassment, I answer that first,

**"Sensei...are you a judo practitioner? Or any other martial art?"**

She asks, but I really don't have that kind of experience.

**"No, none at all. I just said it to shake off the policeman. I only had some experience on judo in gym class, so I can't really say so."**

**"Well, I guessed so...but despite so, you managed to save Milady, and me in the process. If that really got its way to the police station, I don't think the matter can be settled even with me being fired..."**

It's only after I hear her say this that I realize how terrible the worst case scenario would have been.

**"Right. If things ended up that way, even the anime airing might be severely affected...I want to thank that Miss Conductor, but I can't say the truth..."**

I express my true thoughts, only to hear Miss Kamishiro lashing at my left ear with an unprecedented harsh voice.

**"Seriously? What are you thinking?"**

No matter how dull-witted I am, I can tell that it's a furious tone.

The normally terrifyingly collected Miss Kamishiro is just terrifying to me now.

Unable to say anything, I don't know what she's angry about, and I don't know what's she's going to say next.

**"Aren't you worried about your own life? If Miss Conductor didn't find you, you might have died, you know?"**

She asked.

**"Ah, you're right."**

Now that she mentioned it, it is true.

"..."

Miss Kamishiro presses the switch of the microphone, but doesn't say anything. This is the first time it happens.

And so, I continue,

**"But it turned out alright. Looking at things now, nobody died, and I managed to perform an unprecedented act. Good thing it didn't get out of hand."**

"..."

For the second time, she remains silent.

I, seated behind Miss Kamishiro, am unable to see any expression on her face. I guess she's having a headache over it. No, she definitely is.

But isn't that good?

I didn't die, Nitadori didn't become a killer, and the plot progression of 'Vice Versa' is more optimistic.

Hm, isn't that good?

**"If...Milady actually killed you on the spot, sensei, she might have killed herself."**

After a long pause, Miss Kamishiro speaks up. She sounds calm, but I feel a chill down my spine. It's about what'll happen after I die, but I don't wish for that to happen either.

**"...Good thing that didn't happen."**

**"But I would have tried to stop her even if I have to die."**

**"I'll leave that to you then."**

**"..."**

For the third time, she's silent.

Miss Kamishiro looks as though she wants to say something, but doesn't. I can sense her speechless expression through my ears, and sense the atmosphere through the seat in front of me.

I guess a little explanation will be better, and so I press my microphone onto my throat, saying, **"Erm...I don't hate the 'all well that ends well saying'. I feel that even after encountering some setback, as long as we're still alive, we can reflect on it and use the experience for our future."**

**"...Hm,, I'll do that too."**

**"Did you fail before, Miss Kamishiro?"**

I ask, and she quickly replies,

**"Last week, when Milady came to look for you, I didn't follow. That's my greatest failure in this life. To be honest, this might cause me some psychological trauma. I suppose my gut won't feel good if I'm to recall that incident."**

For the usually poised Miss Kamishiro, those words sounded really timid. If I'm to boast, I'll probably say that she's human after all.

Bodyguarding is a really tough job. One has to be often wary of the surroundings. Luckily, I'm a high school boy and a light novel author. Thinking



about this, I suddenly heard a puzzling question.

**"Sensei, what do you intend to do to Milady?"**

I don't think Miss Kamishiro is joking, so I suppose it's a serious question. However, I really don't know what she means.

Intend to do what? Refer to 'waking her up because I feel uncomfortable being a pillow'? Doesn't seem to be the case.

Intend to do what? Refer to 'I got strangled, so I want her to lose her job as a voice actress'? Doesn't seem to be the case. Or I should say, definitely not.

Do what? I want to know the meaning to this question.

Thus, I decided to do that.

**"Erm, I don't know what you mean."**

"..."

For the fourth time, Miss Kamishiro remained silent, and so I frantically add on.

**"Well, Nitadori is a girl with all kinds of experiences, so one day, I hope to have her as the basis of a light novel character. Or I should say, I did think of it. I really wanted to do that. However, I hope it won't be rude to her. Of course, I'll explain to her properly, and get her approval."**

When talking to Miss Kamishiro, I forget that there's a girl still leaning on my right shoulder. It's not heavy at all, but it does give a strange sense of presence. I want to try adding this when writing the thoughts of a protagonist. If I'm to use her as the basis, I'll have to get approval from her, I guess?

Miss Kamishiro answers,

**"Well, when that happens, please do so."**

After that, there's no conversation.

I have become Nitadori's pillow, so I can't move, and can't reach for the luggage on the rack. I got nothing to do.

Thus, I start to stare at the window. Less than a minute, and it seems the fatigue from the person sleeping beside me has spread to me.

I'm starting to feel tired.

But I have to get off first. I can't sleep.

No matter what, I have to stay awake.

Luckily, the weather's fine. Let's look outside the window, and think about the future plot progressions for 'Vice Versa'.

I can't use my laptop, but luckily, I have a smartphone in my pocket. Let's use this to record the idea.

I--

Still remember having such thoughts back then.

However, I can't remember when I fell asleep at all.

And when I woke out, I found that the train was about to enter the terminal, where the bright lights shone.

The seat beside me, and in front of me--

Are both empty.

# Chapter 1-2 - May 22, I slept on him

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

Right now, I'm right on him, and he's lying face up on the bed.

My hands are on the sides of his neck, pressing down on the carotid artery.

Is he usually this hot?

Or am I usually this cold?

Or is it because I'm so tense, the color of blood is drained off from my hands?

Or maybe it's a combination of them?

Or was it all of it?

I could feel the heat coming from the skin on his skin, so hot that my hands were almost scalded.

How did it end up like this...?

I didn't want to do this.

I didn't want to do this again...

I had no intention of doing this again!

How did things end up like this...?

I start to recollect everything that happened till this point.

May 22nd.

It was a few minutes before the Limited Express reached the terminal, when I finally woke up.

Miss Akane is pinching hard at my right cheek, and pulls me away from my dream. She's always waking me up this way. No matter the occasion, she knows this is the best way to wake me up.

Whenever I wake up, I'll forget the dreams I saw, but I'm sure that there aren't any good dreams.

After I woke up, I find myself in the racing train, my body tilted heavily towards the left. My left shoulder and head are resting on someone's back.

I straighten my body, and turn my head left, realizing what it is.

"..."

Sitting over there with his head slumped there is the boy who is my senior and classmate.

I was touched by the novel this person wrote.

I felt that I was saved.

And so, I wrote in a fan letter.

Without any shame, I revealed my weaknesses and tragedies, conveying my thoughts.

And so, I received a reply from him, words of encouragement.

Words cannot describe how delighted I was back then.

I always imagined how this person was like.

When I heard that an anime of the work was in the works, without any shame, I did whatever I could do to obtain the acting role of the character I admired.

And I defeated many people to obtain that role.

When I heard that I was able to meet him live during the first After Record, I

was so excited that I couldn't sleep.

And then, I got additionally nervous during my first After Record, so much that this would be the one day in my life that I had most difficulty in maintaining my composure. I was really shocked to learn that he's only a year older than me. Till this point, the sensei I had always imagined was that he was probably male, around 27-28, graduated from college, with work experience, and became a professional author.

And that day finally came to an end—

During the next twelve After Records, I guessed that there might be a chance or two to talk alone. Until then, I wanted to introduce myself. Of course, I couldn't talk about everything. I just wanted him to know of the existence of this voice actress called 'Eri Nitadori'.

Having such thoughts, when I was done with my self-introductions during the new school term of my Sophomore year in high school, sensei, who was seated right before me, had turned his head around to look at me—I guess I got lucky that I didn't pass out at that moment.

And when I saw him at the platform that Thursday, I was really taken aback.

Before this, I had hopes that 'since we're headed to the same place, I might be able to meet him', but I never expected both of us to meet.

And thus, Time to Play.

I decided to act.

That's because I felt that I wouldn't be able to talk to him normally no matter what.

I would probably be so tense that my face would freeze, I would use overtly formal language that would have stunned anyone, and shocked sensei as a result.

But I couldn't let myself miss out on this opportunity.

Thus, Time to Play.

I decided to play as a female classmate who was being affectionate (to put it bluntly, being bold and acting too mature).

At the same time, I had a promise with him that we wouldn't talk to each other in school. That's because, if I wasn't careful, I might end up divulging my secret.

I felt that my identity would ultimately be made known, so I was fine with it. However, if I were to reveal sensei's secret, there would be no point of return.

So I obtained the opportunity to play the 'role' of 'the one to sit side by side, the classmate who had a similar secret, and a colleague at work'.

I know it might be rude of me to say this, but I got the feeling that sensei isn't good at talking. If I want to keep talking with him, what shall I do?

I tried my best to think, and I got the answer.

"I just need to ask questions easy for sensei to answer."

But what kind of questions are they?

"What sensei knows really well. In other words, the profession of being an author."

So I decided to play the role of 'someone who wants to know what an author does', and talk with him every week.

I wasn't so curious that I wanted to ask about everything, but it wasn't that I was completely disinterested in the profession of authorship.

To create a scenario 'easy' for sensei to answer, every week, I would prepare presents.

The one thing that isn't 'expensive' and yet can make people happy is food.

Speaking of the 'snacks', it might sound nice at first, but it can be called 'bait'. To be honest, I didn't know how else to call it.

There are hundreds of options for food alone, and I was bothered about what to choose, before I finally decided on the safest bet that was potato chips.

Thinking back, in the afterword sensei wrote at the end of the 'Dengeki Bunko Magazine', sensei once mentioned that *'For potato chips, I find that sea salt flavor tastes best, and I only eat that'*.

I never bought potato chips of that flavor. Speaking of which, I never bought



that particular flavor, even when overseas.

So I went around the convenience stores, looking for it for a long time. The first store didn't sell that, so I went to a few more.

I finally managed to buy one, but I didn't know if sensei really liked it, and I was really worried.

After seeing sensei happily accept it and enjoy himself, I was really happy.

And sensei actually answered my questions.

Just like this, I manage to sit beside him for five straight weeks— But last week, I tried to kill sensei.

I had a peek at the draft of 'Vice Versa'.

After sensei went to the toilet, a thought suddenly struck me.

When sensei placed his bag containing the draft at the front of his seat, wasn't he basically saying that I could have a look?

Since I'm playing as Meek, shouldn't I know everything about her? If I can know the plot beforehand, I should be able to add depth to my acting, right?

In hindsight, I should have known that it was the wrong idea.

But back then, that was what I actually assumed.

And so I read the draft.

And so I strangled sensei.

My memories were vague.

But there was one thing I was really clear about. Back then, I had a thought that 'I have to save Meek no matter what'.

I heard a scream, was knocked down, and after that, I couldn't remember

anything.

When I woke up, I found myself in the infirmary of the station.

As for what happened next, I remembered really well.

This week, during the time I excused myself from school, Miss Akane told me, "It's fine now. That peon came up with one huge lie to save you, Milady Stella. He definitely doesn't hate you."

It was unbelievable.

He nearly got killed by me, and yet he doesn't hate me. How is it possible that such a person exists?

If it had been me, I would never forgive anyone who did that.

I won't forgive those who bullied me violently or verbally. If it's legal, even at this point, I still want to kill them all.

The act sensei did in the infirmary is probably because he just didn't want to involve himself in a troublesome case, and not because he has forgiven me.

No, it's the opposite.

Later on, in the classroom or the studio—

He'll continue to torment me mentally, and that's why he didn't lodge a police report.

But even so, I can't do anything about it.

That's the right way to hit back, and I can't do anything about it.

Just thinking of that causes my gut to sink like lead, but I can't do anything about it.

"If that's how you want to think about it, Milady, all I can say is that you can 'do whatever you please'—However, I do feel that you don't have to feel that way."

In the middle of the night, Miss Akane told me this as I remained pale, unable to sleep.

"You can't keep taking breaks from school forever. No, school doesn't matter here. You do need to head to Tokyo for work on Friday however. I do strongly suggest that you go to school on Thursday."

But what will the people at school say about me?

If my identity is revealed, and I become the laughing stock of the class, what should I do?

If I, as I experienced before, were to be called out as a fake Japanese with a wig, colored contact lenses and a fake name, what do I do?

"As they say, 'just adapt accordingly', if anyone in class is so petty that he can't accept you, you can simply skip high school. Given your academic ability, Milady, you should be able to study in a university. However—"

However?

"As I had said so many times already, I don't think sensei is the type of person to do such a thing. If he had intended to do so—he would have told everyone else about this, right? Has any friend of yours called to inform you or written in letters to scold you? Furthermore, I don't think sensei is waiting for you in school just to reveal your secret in front of you."

I didn't know if that was the case.

But on Miss Akane's insistence, I finally went to school— And unexpectedly, I learned that Meek would be revived.

I couldn't understand.

Why didn't sensei hate me?

He was nearly killed, so why didn't he hate me?

Why wasn't he angry with me?

He was nearly killed, so why wasn't he angry with me?

And he even edited the draft so that Meek got revived, like he's saying that 'you're right'.

I don't understand at all.

What exactly is sensei thinking?

I want to know about this.

And thus, I can only apologize about what I've done properly, and then ask him about what it is.

He nearly got killed for some strange reason, so why's he willing to forgive me?

To obtain this answer, I could only ride on the train again.

This is because I can only talk with sensei on that train.

"In that case, I won't be driving. Honestly, I really don't like to drive for too long, and not in Tokyo too. I'm pretty bad at driving."

Miss Akane said with a smile.

She's lying.

She likes to drive, and is reliable in that. As my chauffeur and bodyguard, she won't be able to get this job if she's not competent.

She continued,

"I might suggest that you don't force yourself to know everything, and hope that you'll aim to talk normally with him. Please continue to talk with him without using any formal language or courtesy like before. It's pointless to keep apologizing, Milady, and speaking of which, I do feel that sensei doesn't hope for you to continue doing that. Please continue with that usual attitude of yours."

*Can I really do such a thing?* I asked, and Miss Akane winked with a smile, giving me an unexpected answer.

"Oh? Haven't you been doing that all this while?"

Doing what?

"Acting. Time to Play."

I glance aside at sensei's sleeping face, and for a moment, I recalled the past like the lights passing me by.

"Then, shall we get off first this week?"

Miss Akane whispers to me, continuing,

"Let's take this train again next week."

## Chapter 2-1 - May 29, I had questions

I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, strangled by my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress.

And so, at this point.

I'm right before Nitadori's face--

And I had a big question in my mind.

While I know how dull-witted I am, her face seems to be showing some uneasiness, confusion, and fear.

I guess that's it.

To be honest, I am really concerned.

But if possible--

I want to keep it like this for a while.

May 29th, Thursday.

The eventful May was about to end.

Under the high temperatures akin to summer, I boarded the Limited Express as usual.

The weather's great, and the sun dangling in the sky lit the carriage.

When heading towards Tokyo, I would sit by the left side of the carriage, for I would face the East once we depart. Thus, I would avoid the afternoon sunlight, and could still see the computer screen.

But even so, ever since I started conversing with Nitadori on April 17th, I never got the time to work on the train.



Last Friday, on the 23rd, the After Record ended smoothly.

We were progressing into the 8th episode of the anime 'Vice Versa', the second volume of the original light novel series. The story's now in the so-called 'Side Sin'.

For some reason, Sin ended up in modern Japan. He was in the midst of military training, and thus appeared in full armor, dressed with bodyplate, sword and helmet.

Sin was curious to everything he saw, and Shin, who wanted to live a peaceful life, was completely befuddled.

The 8th episode was clearly meant to be comical. During the After Record, the studio was buzzing with laughter.

The anime staff added a lot more emphasis to the culture gap Sin experienced when he came to modern Japan, making his curiosity look idiotic.

I supposed it was because there was time for it in the anime that the number of scenes of Sin 'dying' (and reviving) far exceeded the original work.

All I wrote was him touching the high voltage cables, while the anime added other scenes--

Like him drowning in a lake after jumping in with full armor.

Running at a truck, only to be knocked aside, fell over a bridge, and died.

Trying to see if he could use magic in Japan, finding out he could just to get blown up by his own offensive spells.

There were various kinds of 'deaths'. (Naturally, the overly scary deaths cannot be depicted graphically. For every Sin's death, the show would depict Shin's annoyed and stunned look instead.) Such changes were completed, as the series composer had familiarized himself with the original work.

When writing the second volume, I could not think of a reason--

But when writing the seventh volume, I added a reason, "Why does Sin want

to seek death in modern Japan? Why is he so eager to die?"

The reason would be, "Sin sought death, for he had to know the pain of death."

As he bore the mission of being the ruler of a country, technically he could not die in Reputation. Bluntly put, even when his subjects die, he can't die.

In that case, he should at least die many times in this isekai called 'Japan', to understand the pain of death. In this story, Sin's foolish deaths are all reasonable.

Shin didn't know Sin's true intentions, and was left completely flabbergasted.

But even so, Shin couldn't just let Sin be. Sin would be violating the no-weapons law just by walking around, and if he were to continue living in Japan, he would have easily broken the law without knowing.

And if Sin was to be charged, Shin would be the first to be arrested.

"The one at fault is the guy who looks like me, that magician knight who comes from the warring isekai. It has nothing to do with me!"

But even though he would shout, it was unlikely the police would believe him.

Left with no choice, he had to bring Sin back to his house.

And just as how he brought the stray cat home, Shin intended to hide Sin for the time being--

But just like the former, his mother soon found out.

And again, just like the former, his mother easily agreed for some reason, so Sin started living at the Tsumizonos for the time being, while Shin's father was out at work.

In the manuscript of the tenth volume that was to be sold in July, I had Shin's mother act as though she had known Sin before.

Thus, there was a foreshadowing in the eighth episode. Basically, once Shin's mother met Sin, she showed a slight change on her face.

If there's a second series of the anime, I supposed it would link up to the ending I can currently think of. The anime should then be able to make use of

the knowledge Shin's mother knew of, as established in that eighth episode.

Sin lost his mother since young, so surely he would obey whatever Shin's mother would say, and be a 'good boy', at least at home.

The ending of the eighth episode remained the same. The childhood friend Yui who came to Shin's house mistook Sin for Shin, and there's a nice mood formed.

Nitadori, who came back for the After Record after skipping a week--

Was acting as a girl who showed up twice. Her role was Shin's classmate, Yui's good friend.

*"What are you hiding, Tsumizono-kun?"*

*"See you tomorrow!"*

Just two lines.

Just to note, this girl has no name. She's an original character for the anime.

Based on the positioning in the classroom, the anime staff had her designated as 'window-side girl'--or to shorten her name, 'Madoko-chan'.

Madoko-chan had freckles on her face, and shoulder-length brown hair. The illustrator did provide a draft illustration.

For plot effects purposes, Madoko-chan was very forthright in personality. While Shin and Yui were always having troubles, she would yap off at them.

And other than this episode, Madoko-chan would show up in the eleventh episode, squealing with her classmate.

Also, in the twelfth episode, right before the ending, she would have a slightly extended conversation with Shin.

Because of Sin's (non-malicious) actions, the relationship between Shin and Yui was in utter shambles.

Madoko-chan said some words to console Shin, to cheer him on. Of course, I didn't write those lines; it's an anime-original scene.

Just to note, in the following last episode, the thirteenth, the story would depict Shin being warped off to Reputation again. Thus, Shin would be reunited with many characters again, and even Meek had a line.

And on this day, Nitadori would be voicing the crowd along with the other actors, along with her role as Madoko-chan. It's called a 'mob scene', or just 'mob' for short.

It's a little pretentious of me to say, but I thought Nitadori's acting was fine.

I had assumed that her performance would be affected after that happened, and that one week break she took, but it seemed I was worrying too much. I guess I'm relieved.

There was nothing in particular to deal with on that day, so the editor-in-charge and I quickly left the studio.

Shin's voice actor did talk to me the previous week, but this week, I was not caught by him.

From Monday to Thursday this week, I had an important event for a high school boy--mid-term tests.

For the first time in over a year, I participated in these tests.

The absence over this year was exceptionally long.

I felt nostalgic when I had to write my class and name on the answer sheet. I thoroughly realized that I had really returned back to being a high school boy.

Everything was fine from Monday to Wednesday. After the tests in the morning, I would head home, and seal off all thoughts about the novel--writing, actually. I would spend the time before I sleep to study for the tests the following day. I would spend the whole day studying, sometimes taking a break, looking afar. It's a nostalgic feeling.

The editor-in-charge also knew that I was having exams, so he would not contact me.

Sometimes, I had to respond to emergency matters regarding the anime, so I was mentally prepared to some extent.

So on Thursday, the last day of the mid-terms, today--

Something happened about 5 hours ago, one that left me perturbed.

It was noon, right after the tests had ended.

Again on this day, I would take the evening Limited Express to Tokyo--

But unlike the usual, I had ample time left. There was no need to hurry back home.

First off, I had lunch at the school cafeteria, and I would take my time while heading home.

So I thought, but a girl spoke to me,

"Erm..."

Of course, it wasn't Nitadori.

The latter was still seated at her desk behind me, and till this point, I heard her stuff her items into her bag. That sound stopped as the girl was speaking to me.

"Y-yes?"

I remained seated as I turned my face towards the one asking.

Standing there was obviously my classmate. This girl had short black hair, a little petite, probably very demure.

We had approximately two months of classes together, but I never remembered her name. I never spoke to her. I supposed she's not the girl...who questioned me over Nitadori.

She looked down at my face tentatively. I really didn't know what she wanted to say.

I was worried she would be given weird looks as she's talking to this guy here who wouldn't talk to others, so I looked around, but it seemed I was thinking too much, And in keigo, she spoke,

"Hello, with regards to the recitation last week--"

Eh?

Looks like something bad's about to happen, I guess?

In my mind, the dull danger management sensor went off.,

"The 'Vice Versa' scene you recited--"

Better run away.

"If it can be found on the internet, please tell me the address. If it cannot be found, I hope that you can print a copy of it and give it to me."

I should be running away now, right?

Once this scared looking girl said this, her face suddenly changed expressions, probably to shake off all doubts.

"To be honest!"

In a moment, she brightened up. Her face was dazzling,

"I'm! Actually, I'm a big, big, big fan of 'Vice Versa'! I read them all! I really am looking forward to the anime that's about to start in July!"





Woah! Thank you! Thank you!

"Ah...ahem, I...see."

I faked a cough, covering my mouth. It'll be bad if she realizes I'm all giddy with joy.

"But though I started following this work ever since it was first sold, I didn't know it was actually a web novel!"

Yep, because it's not.

"So if there are new plot developments I can see later on, I want to have a look too! Especially the part you read! I want to know what happened before and after!"

So, I can't do that.

That's because I did edit the part I recited, and the editor-in-charge told me, "Nice plot, but it's a little messy." So I had to finetune it. Also, I had to ensure that the plot development afterwards would be logical, so I'm currently editing the draft of the eleventh volume.

I couldn't tell her what I am unable to say. With a grin, this girl went straight to the point, "Erm...if it's convenient...can i chat with you as a fellow fan of 'Vice Versa'? How about the school canteen? Actually...I was considering chatting with you once the tests ended!"

Crak!

There was the sound of a chair shaking at the seat behind me.

Surely it was from Nitadori.

Was she tense? Smiling? Angry at something? I didn't know the reason. Maybe all these emotions.

"E-erm..."

I had to say something to this certain smiling classmate, so I, still unable to turn my head around, started to think.

I immediately thought of three ideas.

First off, and the easiest, would be to tell the truth.

But once I had this thought, I immediately understood that it was the worst possible course of action.

If I stated my secret, she would surely ask me lots of this. I wouldn't be sure if she would keep this secret.

And most importantly, she would further question me, why I would read such a new plot development during class time.

In that case, she might end up knowing that it was because of Nitadori, and that I might divulge her secret.

I couldn't do that.

Leaving my own matters aside, no matter how bad it got, I swore that 'even if I have to die', I would keep the matter of Nitadori being a voice actress a secret.

The other method would be to try and act, and lie,

"Ah, that, you say?"

"Ah, that, you mean? It's all a lie! I'm a huge fan of 'Vice Versa', so I tried writing my own story of what would happen afterwards. I guess you and sensei got duped easily,ahaha."

It seemed mean.

But I supposed it's a lot better than the first option...

If only this girl before me is to be angry.

"What, I see! But I think you have good writing. Good enough to try writing your own fanfiction! Let's discuss this as fellow fans!"

But if she's to say this, what do I do?

So I had to keep lying. I had no confidence that I could continue doing that.

The last option, the third one, well, that's pretty clear.

So I decided to do this.

I took my bag and ran,

"E-erm! Yeah--sorry!"

Saying that, I dashed out of the classroom.

As I had to pass by the back door that was closer, I ran by Nitadori.

"..."

I could see Nitadori seated on the chair, trying her best to stifle her laughter. She appeared as though she was not involved in this.

"Sorry about what happened in the classroom! But I really was trying to hold back from laughing! I was holding it in! I did!"

"I see. But, the reason? Whose fault is this?"

"Yes! It's my fault, I'm sorry! Pfft! Wahahaha!"

And that was the conversation that started between Nitadori and me.

I guess Nitadori couldn't hold it in anymore as she laughed out loud. She really was enjoying herself.

It's a good thing there were few passengers from the station were just left from. Miss Kamishiro, seated to the right, remained silent. I decided to deem her as a Zashiki Warashi or something.

Leaving aside what we're discussing, she's able to not converse with me in formal language, and that's good. It's also a good thing that she's willing to smile. I don't want to talk about anything serious, on the train at least.

Even if we're not on the train, honestly, I don't have confidence in maintaining a conversation with Nitadori in 'Stella' mode--when she's using formal language. I think it's more precise if I say "I don't have confidence in conversing with Miss Stella Hamilton".

After laughing, Nitadori handed me the usual convenience store bag, saying, "Ah, this is for you. Eat more and grow."

Stored inside are the usual, my favorite salted seaweed flavor.

"Thanks. I'm tucking in."

I said as I accepted it heartily.

"Maybe I won't be able to grow anymore, so have some, okay?"

I could at least joke around easily.

"Starting next week, I'm switching to Consomme."

Nitadori too was able to joke around easily.

I think it's a good thing.

I think it was very good.

There was no need for her to brood over me.

I was feeling hungry, and munched at the potato chips, before the train conductor came to check our tickets. This week, it's not the usual lady, but a young man I met for the first time.

The conductor finished, and went to the carriage behind.

I finished off the half-eaten chip, saying,

"Let's stop here. It's really nice."

"Huh? Aren't those potato chips 'salty' to begin with?" (TN: Actually it's supposed to be 嫌味, a few liberties taken on my part) Nitadori made a rare, creative joke in Japanese (TN Snark: Too bad this guy here ruined it.) "No no, 'salted seaweed flavor'. Thanks for the treat. I'll finish the rest later."

I rolled up the packet of chips, slipped it into the shopping bag, and drank some tea.

Then, I said,,

"Today, erm, 'that girl' really caused me trouble..."

I really was having trouble with her.

Tests finally ended, and I really wanted to motivate myself to write.

But after reaching home and sitting before the computer, I couldn't think of anything but this.

I kept thinking about this, from the way from home to the station, waiting at the station, but I couldn't think of a sure-fire way to settle this.

"It's pretty troublesome, isn't it? Ah, yes, I know I do share some

responsibility."

Nitadori said in a half-joking manner.

"As for what happened later--"

She briefed me on what happened after I escaped.

First off, the girl who spoke to me was named Miss 'Hinata Satake'."

Speaking of which, I did remember a family name called 'Satake' mentioned in class. Whenever I hear this name, I'll wonder 'Is she from Akita'? The Satakes are Akita nobles after all.

She looks pretty ladylike, but she's very lively and bold in nature.

"Hm, I understand very well..."

Since she mentioned this to me out of a sudden, I guess that has to be it.

Miss Satake has outstanding athleticism, and it's said she really stands out during gym classes.

Nitadori had been skipping gym classes to prevent her wig from slipping off, and remained by the side. Thus, it seemed she had paid heed to this. She might have noticed the physical abilities of all the girls in the class.

According to her, Nitadori wasn't on good terms with Miss Satake.

I don't really understand which girls are on bad terms with Nitadori (I don't understand the world of girls. They might have some kind of intense fights behind our backs.) In other words, they're not the type of friends to sit together for lunch, or chat after class.

That's why Nitadori didn't know either.

"I never expected...that she was a loyal fan of 'Vice Versa'..."

Nitadori stared intently at the back of the chair before her, saying this with a miffed tone. I didn't know the reason at all.

I'm really grateful to have a loyal reader, so I'm really happy to be able to hear the thoughts of a classmate of the same age group (though a year younger than me).

Happy I was, this time however, I could not say so.

Also, Nitadori said--

That once I escaped, Miss Satake did not seem especially surprised.

"Ah, he ran away."

She muttered, looking a little happy..

Then for a moment, she exchanged looks with Nitadori, but neither of them said anything.

Miss Satake returned to her seat, picked up her bag, and heartily left the classroom.

"Soon after, assuming that Miss Satake learned that you're playing the role of Meek, she might feel really shocked. What will happened after that thought....?"

I muttered.

Anyway, once the anime airs, I'm not sure if her name will appear in the first episode, she's going to appear in the voice actors list on the credits.

The family name 'Nitadori' is rare. Furthermore, the full name is the same, and she has acting experience too. Looking at these points, Miss Satake will probably figure it out.

I bluntly stated what I thought, and Nitadori puffed her cheeks, yapping back, "Please don't worry about that! Everything's fine on my end!"

She was miffed at me.

"I...see?"

I retorted without thinking,

"It's fine. Once the voice actor list is revealed, 'I'm actually acting as a voice actor. This time, I'm acting as a named character for the first time. I have an obligation not to reveal, but once it airs, I'm not limited to this. Everyone, please watch the anime 'Vice Versa'--I just need to say that without a second thought."

I see, so she's prepared for this.

"The problem is, if everyone knows of your real identity, sensei, it's not going to be that easy to deal with."

Again, she was miffed at me. Now that she mentioned it, that's true.

Eh?

But...we just talked about it. Wasn't Nitadori the cause of this?

I guess my stupid face had expressed my thoughts clearly.

"Yes! I'm sorry!"

She threw a tantrum, and apologized to me.

Well, leaving aside this skit-like conversation, Miss Satake is a huge problem.

I really don't want to think of someone, a fan of mine, who hasn't done anything bad, as a problem'--

But she is a problem, so I'm left with no choice.

"Got to think of a way to deal with this no matter what."

Nitadori too,

"Got to think of a way to deal with this no matter what."

Said this in unison.

During these ten seconds or so, we heard the train continue trudging on.

And then, she said,

"Sensei, have you thought of something?"

"I was thinking, but I couldn't..."

I might have succeeded in escaping today, but starting next week, I will have to face her every day. I can't escape unless I drop out or transfer out from school.

I guess that's why Miss Satake said "ah, he ran away", since she understood this well.

She said that without panicking, like a hunter knowing the drinking place of its



prey.

"Hmmm..."

I looked up at the sky, the rack on the train carriage in fact, and muttered what I really thought, "I can just tell Miss Satake the truth, and then say to her 'that's how it is, so please keep it a secret.'" I guess this won't work though..."

Nitadori tersely asked,

"Do you think a girl's really able to keep a secret?"

Ugh, I felt a shiver down my spine.

"Erm...I guess not..."

Nitadori herself is a girl, but it's a matter about her career, so I don't think she's the type to blurt it out. For Miss Satake however, I couldn't be assured of that.

"Better not do that..."

After hearing that, Nitadori nodded sadly.

I gave my second idea.

"So--if I insist that 'it's my fanfiction', what do you think? She might go 'as a fellow fan, let's chat', but I'll try shaking her off by saying 'I don't like mingling around with others'..."

I was wondering if the 'second method' would have been effective. So I asked Nitadori And she answered,

"Thank goodness you actually mentioned this instead of doing this..."

That's a pretty vague line from Nitadori,

"Sensei...you haven't realized this, have you?"

"Hmm?"

I turned to my right, towards Nitadori.

And found her seated there, giving a 'goodness gracious' face.

Did I make such a ridiculous mistake? Her face is basically saying 'I think it's fine to point that out, right? But I might have to wait for him to figure it out'.

Even this dull-witted me figured out that much.

That there was a fatal flaw in the 'second option.

What is that? I racked my brains. After about ten seconds,

"--Ah!"

I finally figured it out.

I never thought of this in the classroom. If Nitadori hasn't showed a 'grimace', I would have lived a peaceful life until the 'moment' came.

With what might be a terrible look on my face, I weakly answered,

"No...even if I insist on it being a 'fanfiction'...the lie can only last until September 10th..."

"Right."

Nitadori showed a slight smile, nodding,

Her face was basically saying 'ah, thank goodness this guy next to me isn't a complete idiot'.

What I recited hinted that Meek might revive, and it was planned to be in the 11th volume.

Though the messy parts have to be edited, the plot will surely remain the same. Miss Satake will definitely read the 11th volume and recall this.

Once it's discovered that the plot is the same, anyone will realize that it's not just some fanfiction.

"Good thing I didn't say that in class..."

I really felt a chill inside my heart.

If I had said it back then, the result would have been far worse than 'since we're fellow fans, let's get along'.

I took a sip of tea to calm myself down, and said while basically asking myself, "So, I can only insist 'that's a document that was uploaded onto the internet', I guess...?"

Since that part is going to be published anyway, I can only insist 'that's a part the author wrote'. In September, the facts will still match up.

Nitadori thought for about three seconds, saying with a serious tone, along with the feminine terms she rarely used, "While I do firmly believe this is better than the previous suggestion, if she is to pursue the matter regarding those facts, how long can you keep it a secret?"

So I thought about it, and figured it was as Nitadori has said. Anyone can figure out the truth after some investigations.

In modern society, it's easy to find information through the internet.

All she needs to do is to check on the message boards or the question and answer pages.

And she'll figure out that 'in fact, Vice Versa isn't a web novel'.

The internet users will question her,

"Who's the one spreading these rumors?"

Yes, it's the author. I'm not joking.

"I guess not...this can't last till September."

I said, and then I realized that reciting that part in class was a terrible decision.

But I had a change of thought. If I hadn't done so, things might have gotten worse.

If I had said 'that's a doujinshi', the outcome might be different, I guess? No, seems like it'll be the same.

I believe that the decision wasn't a mistake. All that's left is to settle this problem created by this chain of events.

"Alright."

After hearing me out, Nitadori probably sensed that I had a good idea, and turned her bespectacled stare towards me.

I looked towards the brown irises beneath the light green glasses, answering, "Let's keep running."

"What?"

"Starting now, if Miss Satake is to ask me anything, I'll keep running. I'll leave my seat immediately after class and head home immediately. Our duty roster grouping is also different, so there's no problem here!"

"..."

Nitadori remained silent.

'Is this guy really okay?' That's the face she's showing me now, I guess.

But since I can't think of any other way out, this has to be the best way out, right?

"Well, if you say so, sensei..."

See? Nitadori agreed,

"It's fine. Nobody in class will talk to me, so even if I keep running, it's fine isn't it?"

I never expected this tragic reality of mine to be so useful here. I sense this 'ordinary high school boy' tag here is becoming distant from me again.

"Well, if you say so, sensei..."

With an inexplicable look of complicated feelings, Nitadori muttered again.

I made my conclusion, decided to keep 'running away', and assumed this case closed for now.

So I kept drinking tea as I looked out of the window.

Under the blue sunny sky, the train continued to stop at the stations and race off over and over again. I could see a dazzling green amidst the mountains outside the window.

I closed the PET bottle, and looked forward, before sensing a stare.

"..."

Nitadori was staring at me with a silent, stiff face.

"..."

I too peered back at her light green rimmed glasses, white nose, cheeks to her side. I was scared of staring into her eyes directly.

I was thinking that if I kept this up, she would say something, so I waited, "..."

But Nitadori did not say anything.

Finally, I noticed that she might not be looking at me, but at the scenery outside, so I turned my eyes towards the window again.

The train then entered the tunnel, and this time, my eyes met Nitadori's, whose eyes were reflected on the window.

Again I turned around--

"What is it?"

I asked her as I turned around. I didn't know why she was so stunned, and I couldn't calm down no matter what "Ah! That...!"

Nitadori nodded away with a serious look as she voiced out. Even in the tunnel, her voice was loud, so I guess she was pretty loud.

"Yeah?"

I knew Nitadori was trying to ask me something. As for what it was, I could only wait for her to continue.

Within my vision was Nitadori frowning nervously, and Miss Kamishiro's face beyond that "..."

Miss Kamishiro glanced aside at me silently. Less than a second later, she turned her face aside, and looked forward, 'none of my business' so she seemed to be implying.

The train left the tunnel, and the carriage got bright.

The light shone upon Nitadori's face. It's a little early for sunset, but the sunlight was a lot less harsh than it was at noon.

While Nitadori's personality probably wouldn't change because of this, to me, she had 'become a different person'.

"Sensei..."

Nitadori slowly moved her stiff face.

I couldn't predict what she would say next, and to be honest, I was really scared. What if she's to say something hurtful? What shall I do?

I inadvertently braced myself.

"Please tell me how to contact you!"

What Nitadori said however was something so trivial.

"What? --Contact, as in, cellphone number, or email address, right?"

I asked, my mood dampened.

"Y-yes--o-of course."

Nitadori stammered her affirmation.

"What, that's it...?"

I was worried she would say something, but once she actually spoke up, I found it wasn't anything. As for why Nitadori was asking in that manner, it remains a mystery to me.

But even so, it's pointless for me to ask her, so I took out my smartphone, and said to Nitadori, whose face remained stiff, "Got it. Contact, including phone number, mail address, and email. I'll tell you everything."

So we exchanged contact info, our phone numbers in fact--

Thinking hard about it, I should have done so a long time ago.

If we had our contacts two weeks ago, I could have contacted her easily after I got strangled. I didn't know what to say, but at the very least, I could have told her 'Don't mind'.

In any case, I regretted not doing so in the beginning.

This time, I got her contact, I felt relieved. Ah, basically, I probably won't get choked by Nitadori again.

So while we're exchanging contacts, Miss Kamishiro looked over at us from time to time, but never said anything.

I had to switch the input manner to 'reading' mode, and had the smartphone

store some data.

But at this moment, I was wondering if I should classify her as a 'work acquaintance' like the others, or to classify her as a 'friend'.

I know it's impossible for me to classify her as 'family', which contains only mom.

Where do I put her? I kept looking down, and found Nitadori typing something at a startling speed, but I shouldn't be peeking.

She's a colleague, but a friend? No, isn't this kind of vague? Won't it be arrogant of me to classify a classmate I know at work as a 'friend'?

So--

Without the person next to me noticing, I grouped her name under 'friends'.

She's the first person in that group.

To conceal this fact, I slipped the smartphone into my pocket, but it vibrated a few times.

"Woah!"

I squealed in surprise, and realized it was vibrating due to the new notification.

It might be a message from the editor at the office. He did mention that he would contact me after the Mid-Terms were over.

I took out the smartphone I had just kept, and looked at the screen.

Who would appear on the screen?

'Sender: Eri Nitadori'

'Title: Received'.

It was a confirmation message from Nitadori, nothing much.

The signals released several centimeters to the right would reach the relay station, pass through the internet, back to the relay station, and into my phone. That's a long detour.

The content was,

'Please continue to take care of me'.

Concise and positive. To me now, it's something that left me most pleased.

I looked at the sender, and saw the person to my right holding her cellphone. This horse sashimi-loving bespectacled girl was smiling.

"Your reply?"

She suddenly made this request.

It was the first time in my life that someone asked for a reply.

'I haven't sent a message to my friend'. Did she figure that out?

Was she probing me? Or training me?

If I send the wrong reply, will she start nitpicking at my habit?

"What this this? I guess we don't need to contact each other! Thinking about it, there's nothing to contact each other about, right?"

Would she say such a thing--

"Delete..."

And delete the data before me?

She might delete the data, and even the address.

"..."

While I was left in the lurch with regards to this sudden test, the smartphone in my hand suddenly vibrated.

This time, the shock was much bigger than before. That device, the smartphone I was used to, nearly slipped out of my hands, Time's up baby!' I thought it would be a message from Nitadori, something like that--

Only to find that Nitadori too was taken aback by my squeal. The phone in my hand was vibrating in a different manner, and I understood that it was a call.

On this Earth, there's only two people who would call me. Ever since I received this device, there were only two numbers on my call logs, wrong numbers aside.



Mom should be sleeping now, so there's only one possibility left.

Looking at the screen, I saw that it was from 'AMW editorial branch'. AMW refers to ASCII Media Works.

Tests were over, so naturally, the editor-in-charge contacted me. If he's not sending a message, that means that I have to answer something.

I had to pick up the call, but I could not speak while seated. It's rude to talk on the phone while in the train. For the Limited Express, it's common courtesy to speak on the aisle linking the carriages.

"Sorry, the editorial branch called."

I said, and Nitadori quickly got up to leave her seat quietly.

"Huh? Is it fine to talk here?"

Luckily, she's not the type to say that sort of thing here.

"Thank you."

I thanked her as I passed by her.

I had to reply Nitadori's message once I was done with my call and returned to my seat, but I had to hold this meeting with the editor.

I passed through the automatic door, and approached the place where I was strangled two weeks ago.

And picked up the phone at this place, the place where the human silhouette might have been marked out with chalk.

The call was regarding a request.

Luckily, the editorial branch had decided on a 'Vice Versa' audio drama in the 'Dengeki Bunko Magazine' that was to be published in August.

The editorial branch wanted to publish an interview involving the anime director and me, and needed my agreement. Of course, the interview would not reveal my identity, and I didn't need to show myself.

I never had an interview, but I had seen the interviews from other Dengeki

Bunko authors. I felt that as long as I remained cautious in my answers, I could hide the fact that I was young, so I agreed.

The editor-in-charge apologized for this sudden request, but to go along with the director's schedule, once the After Record tomorrow's done, the plan is to hold it in the cafe at the studio. I agreed to that then.

There were few tunnels on this route, so I used this opportunity to discuss about 'Vice Versa' with the editor.

The conversation included the following, that the subplot regarding Meek still had to be edited, so when would the discussions be done? Would the guest characters be done by the illustrator, like usual? And also, what about the eBooks that haven't been published.

'Dengeki Bunko Magazine' has an electronic edition, so the editorial branch had discussed the possibility of releasing a very short chapter there. All that was needed were a few pages, and since there were many days until the deadline, I accepted this job.

Also, we had a chat about a new series. 'Vice Versa' isn't over, but the editor wanted to push out a new series before it ended, so he hoped I would prioritize this.

The editor's thoughts was basically, don't wait until this series is over before releasing the new work, but to start work on the new series before I'm done, and have me work on both series concurrently. I agreed with this strategy, so I decided to start thinking of new ideas on how to begin this.

So we kept chatting on the phone, and I found that I spoke for almost 20 minutes.

I took a detour to the washroom, and this time, before leaving, I took notice if there was anyone suddenly crashing into me.

"Ah."

And then, I recalled the assignment from Nitadori. I had to respond to her.

I returned to my seat, and wondered how I should respond to this person next to me. It's really too difficult. I decided to think of what to write, send it,

before returning to my seat.

I took out my smartphone again, opened the message screen, and pondered over how to reply to this 'please take care of me'.

I couldn't think of how to respond, and after three minutes, I gave up, 'Same here. Please take care of me'.

I mistyped three times before entering this vanilla response.

"And same here, same here. I have something to ask of you. Please take care of me." At that moment, I thought using a haiku format would be interesting, but I gave up on that. I really wanted to praise myself.

But even so, 'is this really fine?' I was wondering as I twice hesitated before the send button, and before I knew it, another three minutes passed, so I pressed it.

The moment I did so, the train entered the tunnel, causing an error in transmission.

I stood before the automatic door.

I thought to myself that I had to let Nitadori leave her seat as I passed through the opened door, and entered.

"Ah..."

But Nitadori was not at the seat by the aisle.

She was seated by the window side, the seat I was at. She, who had her long hair draped before her chest, was seated there.

"..."

She leaned her body towards the left windowsill, her eyes closed. I didn't check, but she's probably sleeping.

I realized that Miss Kamishiro behind me had stood up. The latter whispered to me.

"Because you took too much time on the phone."

I whispered back,

"My apologies. I shall seat on the aisle seat."

"If you are willing, you can seat next to me. As you had recommended, the scene here is great."

"No-no need for that."

"Oh? Why?"

"If there are any other passengers--if Nitadori wakes up to see an unfamiliar person next to her, she'll probably be shocked."

"So I'll go sit there instead?"

Miss Kamishiro proposed.

"...No need."

I pondered, and rejected it.

"Oh? Why?"

"I think that if Nitadori wakes up, it'll be weirder for her."

"..."

Without saying a word, Miss Kamishiro returned to that seat.

Trying to be quiet and not shake the seat, I approached that aisle seat, Nitadori's usual place.

I looked left towards her, who was usually on my right. It was a refreshing feeling.

Then, I saw something in her right hand, as she was obviously sleeping.

"..."

Her smartphone.

Now, the failed transmission should be able to be delivered.

"..."

I stared at the screen for ten seconds, did not send, switched off the screen, and slipped the smartphone into my pocket.

And then, I leaned towards the back rest, lowered my head, and closed my

eyes.

And then, Miss Kamishiro shook my shoulders.

I had just fallen asleep, only to be woken up again. I was wondering if something bad had happened--

Looking outside the window I was taken aback. The sky was dark, and the scenery was filled with streets of the city. The train was approaching the terminal.

I was in a deep sleep. Time really passed quickly.

I slowly gazed to my left, and saw that the one there was still sleeping soundly.

To avoid waking her up, I silently removed my backpack from the rack, and nodded towards Miss Kamishiro. She too nodded back to me in appreciation.

I stood with the other passengers at the door, waiting for the train to arrive. I flipped out the smartphone, and edited the message.

I stepped onto the platform--

"Eh."

And I sent the message.

# Chapter 2-2 - May 29, I obtained his contact number

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

Sensei's face is right beneath mine.

He's showing a peaceful, relaxed look.

I don't understand why.

How do I look in sensei's eyes?

Surely, I guessed.

I was showing a panicked look.

It happened on May 29th.

This isn't really a joke.

To be honest, it's a crisis.

In this crisis, sensei's identity might be revealed, and I might end up not being the only one who knows sensei's secret.

I had an ominous feeling when Miss Satake spoke to sensei, no, walked over to talk to him.

And that premonition actually came true.

Surely it was because of me that sensei would read the edited part of 'Vice Versa', since I did such a thing.

So I caused a crisis for sensei.

"I'm! Actually, I'm a big, big, big fan of 'Vice Versa'! I read them all! I really am looking forward to the anime that's about to start in July! Erm...if it's convenient...can i chat with you as a fellow fan of "Vice Versa'? How about the school canteen? Actually...I was considering chatting with you once the tests ended!"

After hearing Miss Satake's words, I--

Intended to stand up.

I wanted to stand up, grab sensei, and drag him out of the classroom before she said anything bad.

But I couldn't.

I couldn't do it, and I didn't have the right to do it.

Thus, all I could do was to act indifferent to whatever sensei did, slip my textbooks into the bag, and watch over him.

What would sensei do?

Would he reveal the truth?

Or would he try to fool his way out with words, like in the infirmary?

Or--

I had these thoughts, and saw sensei dart out.

"Alright!"

I nearly called out. Good thing I held it in.

I didn't know where did sensei's agility come from?

I was curious as to what Miss Satake would show on her face after being left behind?

Of course, I too felt that she was pitiful.

Miss Satake and I love 'Vice Versa'.

But I can't say the truth.

No, I won't.

In this world, I love 'Vice Versa' more than anyone else.

Miss Satake didn't seem dejected at all. For a moment, our eyes met.

"Ah, he got away."

And then, after muttering these words, probably directed towards me, she returned to her seat, picked up her bag, and left the classroom.

After that, I spent more than ten minutes at my seat.

After returning home, and until departure, I kept wondering about the problem caused by Miss Satake.

I don't want to think of my classmate as a 'problem'--

No, this is a problem.

A huge problem.

I--

Don't want sensei to be taken by Miss Satake.

That day, on the train, I raised this incident.

I 'pretended' to be happy, so that sensei wouldn't realize how dire the situation is, but deep inside, I'm very uneasy.

What I'm most scared of is sensei saying, "Let's tell Miss Satake the truth, and have her keep this secret. She's a fan, and will probably do so. Let's have this as a secret between the three of us."

Appearance-wise, I feel that Miss Satake's pretty unpretentious.

As long as sensei tells her the reasons and have her 'to keep the secret no matter what'.

She'll probably keep this a secret until graduation.

But with that, the number of people knowing sensei's secret will surely increase.



She'll definitely keep talking to sensei in class.

It's one thing if they're guys though.

So I quickly rejected sensei's ideas.

I lied, showcasing some really terrible acting.

I had become capable of saying such lies so nonchalantly.

And after that, sensei came up with a stupid idea.

He thought of the most conservative method, to 'keep on avoiding Miss Satake'.

For me, this is the best option.

The problem here however is, how long can he keep running.

At the very least--

I hope sensei can keep running away until I'm able to apologize and ask for the truth.

So i think I won't run away, that I'll face it head on.

But even so, I can't just ask on the train, "Why aren't you mad even though you nearly got choked by me?"

So I decided to summon my courage, do something I never did.

So--

I got sensei's number and mail address.

I felt that I had succeeded, improved.

I sent a greeting to sensei, trying to probe into how he would respond. No matter the reply, I would keep it for eternity.

But sensei had to leave his seat immediately, as he received a call from the editorial branch.

I felt that if I had asked this on May 8th, things would not have been so troublesome, but I sensed that even if it's a small step, I am progressing. So I thought as I suddenly had an urge to sleep.

Like last week, I realized this week that once my tension eased, I really felt the urge to sleep.

"Milady--"

Miss Akane quickly leaned her face over.

"It seems sensei will be taking a long time, so why don't you head over to the window side seat?"

I was probably taken aback.

"You worked hard today, and I think you can sleep. That should be a lot better than 'wanting to force yourself to talk, and making the situation awkward'."

With her usual pretty, piercing look, Miss Akane said so, I felt relieved inside, sensing that she really understood me.

I did not remember if I had dreamed.

Miss Akane pinched my cheek to wake me up, and the train parked at the terminal platform .

The smartphone in my hand vibrated.

"Ah!"

With the fastest speed I ever attained in my life, I looked towards the screen.

"Same here. Please take care of me. If there is anything, please contact me! Do your best for the After Record tomorrow! I'm looking forward to it!) I stared at the little screen for several seconds.

"Now then, shall we get off the train?"

Miss Akane said gently.

# Chapter 3-1 - June 5, I talked to Nitadori at school

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, strangled by my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress.

This is my current predicament.

I know Nitadori's looking confused, but I don't know how i look in her eyes.

It's just my guess--

But I'm definitely--

Showing a peaceful look.

Showing a blissful look.

Showing a look she had never seen before.

June 5th.

A change of months, it's now Summer.

The temperature before had been hot, but I guess Summer's able to interpret the lunar calendar, and it's Minazuki now (TN: The month of no water, 水無月, if taken literally, even though it does rain in June) The winds were strong, and as I stood on the platform, waiting leisurely, it felt comfy.

I got onto the train, and felt the air conditioning to be too strong.

The temperature was terribly cold, and I had a thin jumper over my long sleeved shirt. I'm scared of the cold, and a coat is something I will always heave.

It's a change of seasons at school, and the students are dressed in summer attire.

It's my first time wearing the summer uniform. I feel that the bright school crest on the left chest on the shirt is really cool. Private High schools are interesting in this sense.

I guess it's to be expected of a Private High School. There is air conditioning inside the classroom.

Once the air conditioning starts, I'll probably be so cold that I want a coat. Maybe I should be wearing the winter uniform instead? Or maybe something else?

Shall I buy a summer sweater or a cardigan?

I know the school doesn't have any regulations on the type of coat to wear, and students can wear whatever they like. If sweaters and the like are allowed, I'll be happy.

While I was thinking about that, the train departed on time.

I had a look at the watch, and saw that it was an additional seven seconds beyond the given time of departure.

My preferred watch is a radio watch I bought 'to commemorate the sale of 'Vice Versa', and it would show nary a second of error. Again, I thoroughly understood how Japan's train schedule is the most outstanding in the world.

On the other hand, Nitadori (and Miss Kamishiro) would arrive next to me at different timings. Sometimes, it would be three minutes, and sometimes, five.

So I sat at my usual seat, and tilted my chair back, leaning heavily into it, waiting peaceful.

"Hello...sensei..."

A minute after departure, or to be precise, fifty seven seconds.

Nitadori came towards me along with Miss Kamishiro.

She's not as lively as usual, her head's slightly lowered, showing a stiffened expression. She did not have her long hair tidied up as she sat next to me.

"Ah!"

Then, she hastily held down the wig that was pulled down by something, and

lifted her buttocks. Again, she tied her wig into a bundle, and draped it before her, sighing against, before sitting down.

"Eh..."

There's a reason why Nitadori was feeling so suspicious, so anxious, and probably so furious.

I was apologetic, as it was because of me.

Just a few hours ago.

To handle a predicament back then, I made a strange lie in school.

"Nitadori's my girlfriend."

I made this ridiculous lie.

On the previous week--

May 30th, the After Record for the ninth episode of 'Vice Versa' ended successfully.

After that, I had an interview with the director in the cafe of the recording studio.

It's the first interview for me, but the interviewer would handle the rest, so all I needed to do was to answer cautiously.

I had met the director many times, from the script meetings, the venue visits, to the weekly After Records. I felt that I was able to communicate with him without tension, and state my own thoughts.

When the director praised the story for being amusing, I was really embarrassed.

The interviewer would vet through the answers, so once there are claims 'that cannot be published', they can be edited later. I intended to vet through them, and ensure nothing was lost.

Just last week, Nitadori and I exchanged contacts on this train, but that was the only time we exchanged texts.

I did not know what to write to her, and all I was thinking was 'if she sends something over, let's answer her'. But she never did. Since there's nothing urgent, I thought it was fine.

From Monday, June 2nd, to Wednesday, the mid-Terms were returned to us. After a year, I finally obtained my own results.

The results could be classified in two categories 'a lot better than I thought' and 'a little bad'. The former two were English and language, while the latter was maths. PE wise, my grades aren't good.

But even so, overall, my grades aren't bad for a first mid-Terms, so as I heaved a sigh of relief, I told myself to do my best for the end of terms.

But before then, I wanted to motivate myself into writing the continuation of 'Vice Versa', and I wanted to participate in the After Records of the anime.

What was most worrying to me last weekend, my classmate Miss Satake--

In fact, starting this week, until Wednesday, I had no issues at all.

I stopped arriving at school early like before, and learned how to enter the classroom right before homeroom period. It's just a five minute walk from home to school, so I could easily adjust my time.

If I arrived at school a little early, I would just wait in the place Miss Satake could never enter--the men's toilet.

The toilet's very close to my classroom, and it helped me out. Once I saw the homeroom teacher approaching, I would follow.

And after class, I would immediately slip out of the classroom like usual.

My seat's pretty close to the back door, and it's simple. Miss Satake's seat is at the front left, second column from the window, far from me, so I was able to escape before getting caught.

Before every period, I would slip out to the toilet to kill time. When changing classrooms, I would always be the last to arrive.

Miss Satake did not do anything to try to catch up to me.

I didn't know if she knew I would have my lunch at the school cafeteria, but at the very least, she never showed up there.

I was wondering what would I do if she was to issue a challenge letter into my desk drawer 'I'll be waiting for you behind the gym! Don't run away, come! If not--'

That didn't happen though.

I spent the entire previous week worrying about that, but she wasn't causing any problems.

Until the third period ended on this day, I was feeling relaxed. That's a dampener.

The fourth period was self-study period.

Once the period started, the homeroom teacher came to explain the reason, but I could not remember.

Miss Satake might come to talk during self-study period, so I intended to slip out of the boys' toilet, towards the library, wait for the cafeteria to open, and slip out.

"Oh--"

Right when the homeroom teacher was about to leave the classroom, he stopped with his hand on the half-opened door, wanting to request for something, and said to us, "I need three people, at least two, to help out Endou-sensei. Making pamphlets."

Endou-sensei's the humanities teacher in his mid-thirties. We did attend his world history lessons.

He's short, so delicately thin. His face is thin, and has large eyes.

He's always in a grey suit, so the petty students gave him the rude nickname 'lil Grayman', and treated him like a aliens.

I would hear the nearby seniors and juniors chat about this in the cafeteria. Naturally, they would not say this right to his face.

I was thinking that Endou-sensei wasn't really popular with the students. I had

yet to see him chatting with the students on the corridor or in the classroom.

In class, his teaching methods are detailed, and though not erroneous in any ways, to put it bluntly, he was monotonous.

Subjectively, this brash me would feel that such teachers would be most difficult to implement as characters when writing in school.

Having the students help out means that we're probably asked to 'fold some school activity documents into pamphlets, and stick something between them, before fastening them with staples', or something like that.

I did that once in school. As I was helping out during class, there were no rewards.

Do I do some self-study (to a limited extent) in the noisy classroom? Or to help out the teacher who probably wouldn't be too enthused when talking.

If anyone's to ask me what I would choose, I felt that there's no need to worry about it.

But as there's definitely no one who would volunteer, I was guessing the teacher would just nominate a few people.

While I was guessing that the two or three unfortunate folks would be lamenting their misfortune, I started to lower my head, hoping that I wouldn't be chosen--

"Sensei! I want to help! Along with--!"

I heard a lively girl say this, and was taken aback. Everyone else in class must be the same. There was some buzzing.

So who's this anomaly? It's a familiar voice, yet a voice I didn't think I had heard before.

There were only two seconds or so for me to lower my head to ponder.

The speaker then mentioned my name, and added a '-san' suffix.

"Both of us want to help."

Wait.

No, wait.



Wait a sec.

Once the plot turned out this way, even this dull-witted me realized who it was without looking up.

Miss Satake.

Brilliant tactic. I've been had.

While our classmates were buzzing in confusion, Miss Satake continued,

"I do think it's fine to offer myself for this troublesome work once in a while. But it's bad to involve my friends. Sorry, but I'll have the eldest in the class help me out! Seniority rules!"

So that's how it is. Everyone else in class agreed. No, I don't want you to agree.

I didn't know what sort of face I showed when I lifted my head.

"..."

I took a deep breath, but I couldn't say anything. I had no clear reason to object.

I couldn't just say that "I want to avoid Miss Satake as much as possible, since I don't want my own lie to be seen through."

If I objected while looking flustered, I would just leave a timid, embarrassing impression.

"I see. I'll leave it to both of you then. At the AV room."

The homeroom teacher said,

"As for the third--"

Even without saying anything, I understood.

He probably assumed it's fine if there's no third person. Looking at things, I would end up helping Miss Satake.

Save me.

Somebody save me.

Anybody, please.

And that person was right behind me.

"Sensei, I'm going too."

Nitadori became my hero.

She suddenly pulled her chair back, stood up, and said with a loud, clear voice.

Miss Satake, approaching me from her seat, showed a surprised look at this sudden contestant. Everyone in class is looking confused again, basically saying, 'what is Nitadori trying to do'?

I heard an answer behind my head.

"I--hardly participate in gym classes, so I should help out this much, at least."

While I felt this wasn't much of a reason, there wasn't much buzzing in class. I think what they were concerned about was that three people were chosen, and they could relax.

"Right, understood. Let's go then, both of you."

Miss Satake herself doesn't seem to mind the troublemaker Nitadori.

While Nitadori's assistance relieved me, I really wanted to run away.

Anywhere could do, whether it's the infirmary, or any other country.

If I had a smoke or flash grenade on hand to block out everyone's eyes, I would have used it. Just for this moment. If not now, then when?

But I never brought such a thing to school, and I never had it at home.

I slowly trudged out of my seat, moving like a walking dead.

The school campus was quiet, probably because the other classes were having lessons.

"Hehehe...I can say whatever I want next! No need to rush!"

That's probably what she thought, I felt. The prey was caught, unable to escape.

Miss Satake was right at the front, and Nitadori was right behind. I wanted to

run away, but I ended up about 3 meters behind Nitadori.

Miss Satake tapped at the AV room door.

"Oh, come in."

The person inside answered. For a man, his voice was rather high pitched. No doubt it's Endou-sensei's voice.

Miss Satake and Nitadori entered, and I closed the door behind me, entering the room.

Like usual, Endou-sensei's dressed in a grey suit.

There's a long table in the AV room. There were four piles of printed documents at the table closest to the window, along with a stapling machine.

Looking at us, Endou-sensei did not really react much,

"Oh, the three of you. Satake, Nitadori, and--"

The teacher then mentioned my name.

He did not have a namelist or something on hand. Did he remember all the students he taught? If he did, that's some impressive memory.

"So, line up in a room. Two people by the window. Basically, fold the paper neatly and pile them up. The last one will handle the stapling. If you're tired, swap over."

The instructions given were easy to understand too.

But even so, what do I do? What shall I do?

While I was feeling flustered, Nitadori quickly went to the edge of the table, and sat at the pile of documents. Through the glasses, she gave me a look.

I barely understood her intentions, and she trode from the window to the table. Nitadori inched in, opening a space for me, so I was able to seat the edge.

Miss Satake was the last to move, and went to the other seat without a word, next to Nitadori.

"Alright, let's get to work. It's fine if you can't finish before classes are over. When you're done early, you can go to eat earlier. Looking at things though, it's

probably impossible."

Endou-sensei stared at the stapler machine in his hands, and as he said, there were lots of time, so it seemed we couldn't finish all the work within the fourth period. Over the next forty five minutes, I wouldn't be able to escape from Miss Satake .

So what do I do?

What would happen?

Feeling anxious, Nitadori started picking up the documents, changed the layout, and quickly began to fold.

"Let's work hard and do our best."

As to be expected of Nitadori!

This tactic's basically meant to prevent Miss Satake from talking to me.

I was increasingly unsure of how to thank Nitadori. I might even erect a 'Eri Nitadori shrine' and pray towards it every day.

"Ah, it's fine. You can chat leisurely and work."

And breaking up Nitadori's hard work is Endou-sensei. This guy.

For a moment, I saw Nitadori stop her working hands.

I had all sort of thoughts, but I had to do something. I took a piece of paper from the pile before me.

It's a promotional pamphlet for the first years, regarding the extra-curricular activities. It's an event held by the school to allow the freshmen to build camaraderie. As for why this work is given to Endou-sensei, it's still a mystery.

Nitadori continued to fold the documents neatly, and said calmly,

"But to be honest, I don't know what to say...I don't really talk to me. Isn't it better for everyone to finish work quickly?"

She's basically saying "To be honest, I don't want to chat with you people."

Of course, she's casting the 'Time to Play' spell--at the very least, I thought

she was acting. That arrogant tone was rather impressive.

And then, Miss Satake,

"Woah, this person here is annoying. If she doesn't want to talk, then fine."

If she had said something like that, that would be fine (though I'm sorry that it would affect Nitadori's reputation). Unfortunately, she's not that kind of person.

"I'll get the ball rolling with my favorite novel."

Woah!

No matter how stupid I am, even I knew what that meant.

Endou-sensei, who had been working at the stapling machine in a rhythmic manner, gave an unexpectedly large reaction to this topic, "Eh, you are reading novels, Satake?"

But given the the impression I had of Endou-sensei, it might not be weird to say he loves to read.

I earnestly hoped that both of them would discuss about the Shirakabaha or Dostoyevsky, but of course, things won't go as planned.

"Yeah, I've been reading light novels!"

Ah, the topic's starting to creep towards the fortress called 'Vice Versa'. She's flooding the moats, and the fortress will fall.

I kept moving my arms, wondering what would happen if I were to jump out of this window within inches of me. Just to note, it's the fourth floor.

At this point, I wanted to jump off the building to kill myself.

And so, I guessed Endou-sensei probably never read light novels.

"Oh, then which light novels do you recommend nowadays?"

Those words had me realize that I was wrong.

"Eh, sensei, you understand what I'm saying?"

"Well that's fine. Anyway, what do you say?"

"Basically, I like lots of works. For Dengeki I have purchased every volume of

'DuRaRaRa!' and 'Sword Art Online', but right now, what I most recommend is--  
"

Ahh goodness sake, I know the answer.

"'Vice Versa'!"

I guessed so.

From an author's standpoint, I'm really happy. Personally however, I couldn't be happy.

I accidentally folded the document awkward, and opened it again to fold.

And next to me, Nitadori turned into a 'high speed folding machine', giving a blank look as she repeated her actions.

Surely she was folding them to a precision of millimeters.

So does Endou-sensei know of 'Vice Versa'? Curious about the answer, all I suddenly heard was--

"Oh, that one's interesting."

Woah.

"Let's start talking. Now that you mention it, do you read light novels too, sensei?"

"I've been doing so before you were born. To me, it's no different from an ordinary novel."

"I never expected that!"

If it's Dengeki, I knew of it since it was started in 1993. I did use whatever little pocket change I had."

" I never expected that! You started reading since the last century!"

"Hm, Dengeki's prime has been a few years. You mean last century! Goodness, now you are treating me as an elderly!"

"Well you are twice my age, so you can be considered elderly now."

"One day all of you will be treated as elderly, so prepare yourself."

"Leaving that aside, I never knew you're a light novel reader!"

"I never mentioned this to anyone else before. Just to note, I do like anime and manga too. I never mentioned this either."

"Now that's unexpected. Then! I think you can be a adviser to the manga club or anime club."

"Satake, I don't know if you know, but there are no such clubs at school."

"If not, let's create one! Here's where the story starts. Chapter one."

"That's something students will have to do. There's no such plot in a light novel where a 'teacher wants to be an advisor and assembles five members'."

"No, I think it'll be creative! Popular even!"

Miss Satake continued to prattle off with Endou-sensei in a rhythmic manner, so I prayed to God that they would continue in that manner. Even though I'm an atheist.

But even though, Endou-sensei's interests are pretty surprising. I do feel that if students know about this, their opinions of him might change slightly.

During this time, none of us stopped as we kept on working.

After a quiet few seconds, Endou-sensei said,

"So, about 'Vice Versa'."

It seemed he wanted to continue discussing light novels. If only he could discuss other works instead.

I pretended not to be interested as I kept on working, and Nitadori's probably the same. Actually, both of us were concentrating our ears, scared of missing out any words.

"I think it's the most interesting work amongst the newcomers recently. It's no wonder there's an anime adaptation so soon."

Great!

I prevented myself from jumping. Nitadori folded the documents awkwardly, and folded them again.

Endou-sensei kept stapling at two points, and I glanced aside at him.

The short-haired girl then looked towards me.

"..."

I hastily looked aside.

Was she planning to say something at this point? Did Miss Satake intend to mention the passage I recited? I thought Endou-sensei didn't know about that?

Was Miss Satake intending to mention that and corner me into despair,  
While I was counting all the debts I owed,

"So what do you like about the story, sensei?"

Miss Satake did not direct the topic towards me.

"I see--"

Endou-sensei said with his usual serious look,

"Probably the cliches."

So I started listening to the conversation between the people praising my work.

"'Vice Versa' is pretty old school, too cliché even. One might say it's a mashup of clichés. The story hasn't deviated from the kingship, and there isn't anything unique about the characters. It incorporates a large number of plots and backgrounds from other works."

"Of course. It's a 'Super Episode Faceoff'."

"I think that when writing such a cliché story, there has to be some form of determination. That's why I think the author did good here."

"I get it, I get it. 'Pluto's a girl dressed as a man. In the final battle, Shin used too much force and rubbed her breasts, winning as a result'. Now that was a typical plot that moved me."

"Hm, that cliché's great."

"The setup to move between Reputation and Japan is interesting too, right?"

"That kind of setup allows for both serious and comedic moments. It's rather



bare bones, but I think it's a good idea."

"Yeah. I think if the story only shows one side, it wouldn't be so popular."

"I guess so. The author's pretty smart."

"Definitely an intelligent one."

"You can say so."

What's with this humiliation play?

Or an interrogation?

Or praise?

I was feeling chilly on my back, sweat's trickling down before I knew it.

And so, for a while, Nitadori had been making errors in her folding.

This intricate machine had malfunctioned.

"Want to swap over?"

Endou-sensei asked. It seemed he did not forget his work.

"Ah, I'm fine."

Miss Satake said,

"Same here."

Nitadori too said, and I wordlessly agreed.

"So--about 'Vice Versa'."

So he intended to continue chatting.

Enough already!

Let's chat about the weather tomorrow! It'll probably be sunny!

Maybe we can chat about what kind of meat we can put in curry! I like boneless chicken with skin! What about everyone!

I tried to release a telepathic ability limiter hidden within me--but it's useless. I don't have it.

"I think the author should be pretty young."

Endou-sensei suddenly began his analysis.

"While his personal particulars aren't revealed, I don't think the author's a female as rumored on the internet, but a male instead. Very young even...probably at college age instead."

I was taken aback.

"Eh, why do you think so?"

"I made this guess after reading the work, and looking at the nuances and plots. I did say that the author's able to write a huge mashup of cliches, and I feel it's because the author doesn't have a strong personality, or what I might say, the author lacks the 'I'm writing this sort of story no matter what!' attitude."

Eh! Really?

"Eh! Really?"

Miss Satake's opinion resonated with mine. Endou-sensei continued with his exhilarating analysis.

"I think this work, 'Vice Versa', is a novel written after the author 'analyzed, dismantled and rebuilt' the novels he liked. Thus, I feel that since the author's young and unassuming, he's able to write this work unpretentiously. One good thing about this is that the author never tried to clumsily insert his own personality and make the story awkward.

"'Analyzed, dismantled and rebuilt'. That's familiar."

"Yes, these are the basic three steps in writing."

I agree completely with the teacher. I'm not saying this just because I got praised though. I nearly nodded away, only to hastily stop myself.

"But even so, I guess the author's pretty young. I wonder if you have realized,

Satake, but in 'Vice Versa', there are a lot of 'references' used in the story.

"Eh? Which parts?"

"For example, in the middle of the fifth volume, there's a hill fortress that was attacked by an enemy, right? The defenders wanted to deal lots of damage to the invading desert tribes, and buy some time for Sin and the others. All of them died on the battlefield."

"Yeah. There was a dragon tamer I liked who died in that story. I was so sad. The enemy really liked him, and said that they would spare him, so he could just surrender. That soldier's two sons and the dragons they inherited were saved though."

"That sounded exactly like the Siege of Iwaya Castle.

"What is that?"

Allow the author to explain.

The Siege of Iwaya Castle happened during the Sengoku Era, year 1586, located at 'Iwaya Castle' in Kyushu's Dazaifu.

The Shimazus tried to conquer the entire prefecture of Kyushu, and was said to have sent twenty thousand, or even fifty thousand to conquer the fort. Under the Catholic Daimyo Sorin Otomo, the vessel 'Shigetane Takahashi' led 763 people to combat.

Shigetane Takahashi refused to surrender over and over again, and inflicted a large number of casualties upon the enemy. This intense battle lasted for approximately half a month, and the Takahashis were valiantly wiped out.

The Shimazus won, but suffered heavy casualties, and required lots of time to regroup. Thus, they were unable to unite Kyushu.

When I first learned of this battle, that awe-inspiring way of life by Shigetane Takahashi really moved me.

"It's a battle during the Sengoku period."

Endou-sensei explained it with only one sentence. Concise, really concise.

"The story in the book was basically similar to that battle. I understand very

well that the author clearly used this battle as the basis. I also sensed that the author could have involved other battles when writing this story, but he never did. Thus, I feel that although the author loves history, he's not a history nerd, but one who has a vast amount of knowledge, though lacking in depth.

The teacher never continued, so I sensed that the implied 'that's why' from him was probably a mantra of his. Well, leaving that aside, what's shocking is that the teacher's analysis was spot on.

As he said, I felt that 'rather than writing a clumsy story using my lack of battle knowledge, I might as well...', so I just used that battle as the basis of the story. I did inform the editor-in-charge of my rationale before too.

Miss Satake said,

"I see! Well, about the author though, I think it doesn't matter."

After hearing that, my body went limp, and the papers in my hand nearly slipped out.

"In that case, you shouldn't have bothered with me!"

I wanted to yell. I really wanted to yell out loud.

Leaving aside the author, Miss Satake continued,

"To be honest, as long as the work is interesting, it doesn't matter who the author is. Don't you think so too, sensei? The author might be an evil person too."

I think so too.

There were two people in the room who could be called 'sensei', and one of them answered, "Hm, maybe. No matter how rotten the personality is, how stubborn and twisted the thought process is, an amazing chef will be able to cook up a fine dish. Also, someone once said 'if you want to experience the joy of a work, it's better not to know anything about the author'. Also, this author is a little..."

Endou-sensei started to make a rare stutter at the end.

I was wondering what he wanted to say, but clearly Miss Satake wasn't.

"Of course! Actually, after reading it, I might think that the author's a really repulsive person!"

"Then just leave me alone!"

I wanted to yell. I really wanted to yell out loud.

But while I could not yell, within my eyes, I saw that Nitadori, who was folding, suddenly stop her hands. It appeared she was shaking. Luckily, I couldn't see her face, so I didn't have to..

Well, leaving aside Miss Satake's heartless words--

I'm utterly grateful that my opinions don't matter. The minute hand on the clock continued to turn.

I was wondering how to spend this time. Nitadori's probably thinking the same.

"Speaking of which, 'Vice Versa' has many Homunculus like Meek, with different eye colors. That's a pretty cliché thing, right?"

Miss Satake kept on going.

But even so, I glanced aside at her, and found that she was actually working, and not actually slacking. She's moving rather quickly too. In a fluid manner, she continued to sort out the parts Nitadori and I folded.

As we were 'focused on working', Endou-sensei would only answer her.

"Ah, I think it's a pretty cliché setting. It's difficult to figure out how to include heterochromia eyes. However, the author never used it to show how cool the protagonist is, but had it as the unique characteristic of the supporting characters, the homunculus, and rationalized it with the 'eye embedding ritual'. I think it's pretty smart, and heartfelt."

Endou-sensei really knows a lot.

He read so many light novels before I was born, and it wasn't for show. I really was impressed. He should be able to be an editor, right?

"Oh!"

Miss Satake answered, sounding impressed.

"All the homu homu have unique names. Those names follow some rules, right?"

It was the first time I heard someone call the homunculus that.

But it's a little cute. (TN Snark: Homura called, she wants her nick back) What if I have a certain tribe call the homunculus this? I haven't written this part yet, but everyone speaks Japanese in Reputation, so this should be doable.

"How does it work...it does seem like there is, yet none..."

It means that Miss Satake and Endou-sensei don't understand Russian. But I guess there aren't many Japanese readers who know the meaning behind these names. (TN Snark: Paging Sumipe, paging Sumipe) "But the meaning behind Meek's name, I do know."

Eh? But if you know the meaning behind Meek's name, you should be able to figure out the meaning behind all the names, right?

I stopped and looked towards Endou-sensei. Nitadori too looked right, so I saw her black hair. Behind her, I could see the back of Miss Satake's head.

"What does it mean?"

Miss Satake asked as a matter of fact. As he stapled, Endou-sensei answered, "It's probably the 'Meek' in English, meaning 'obedient', 'servile'." (TN Snark: The Meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity) "Oh, I see. The homunculus do give off a slave-like feeling though."

The moment I heard that--

No!

I yelled in my heart.

"No!"



Nitadori yelled.

I guess they're both taken aback.

This girl had been working silently, and even at the beginning, she said,

"Let's cut the talk and get to work."

Yet she's yelling loud enough to shake the room.

I was taken aback, but even those two discussing 'Vice Versa' were more shocked than I was.

"Ah! Woah!"

"Ah! Woah!"

Both Miss Satake and Endou-sensei were taken aback. Miss Satake even toppled over the pile of papers onto the table.

As for me, I could only see the back of her head, and couldn't see how she was looking I guessed she was fuming like a dog.

After looking at her, those two appeared to have seen a ghost.

I guess the older ones are the wiser ones as Endou-sensei was the first to recover.

"Ahh, that shocked me...So Nitadori, you read 'Vice Versa' too?"

He asked calmly.

"Eh? Eh? Eh?"

On the other hand, Nitadori was panicking.

She never intended to yell, but she couldn't help herself. I understood how she was feeling.

I was unable to speak up, and could only observe silently.

"Eh, ehh...sorry for the sudden outburst."

Nitadori lowered her head slightly. She then said,

"I'm going back to work..."



Nitadori wanted to run away, but Miss Satake, who had picked up the papers, did not let her go, “Well, we could have discussed this if you well. Ah, but as you just said ‘let’s just work quietly’, you can’t speak up, right? But it’s fine! Sensei’s talking too!”

Just hearing the words, it sounded like she’s a nice kid worried about her friends, But looking into it, it just feels like ‘I’m not letting you off!’

Maybe it’s just me reading too much into this.

Thus, Nitadori had to join in the discussion either way. But even so—

‘I have to participate in the conversation’.

It’s a lot better than that.

While I thought I was going aboard,

“Well, erm...I’m going to point out the mistake...”

Nitadori spoke with a rigid tone.

I shivered.

Those two people never realized this.

But I immediately realized.

And I shivered.

There was a slight change of tone when Nitadori said that.

I had chatted with her for long periods on the train, and heard the After Records. I knew that’s not Nitadori’s actual voice.

But whose voice was that?

Meek’s.

Right. That’s the voice of Meek I heard during her recording.

She’s doing that on purpose.

Nitadori’s definitely doing that on purpose. There’s a little difference in the

voices of Meek and Madoko. Regarding that, I sensed that her acting was really intricate.

“That is not what ‘Meek’ means. Surely it is not the ‘Meek’ in English.”

Nitadori spoke using Meek’s voice. As it was directed at Endou-sensei, she was speaking in formal language. I guess that’s Stella for you, since her English pronunciation is so precise.”

“Oh, and that is?”

Meek, no, Nitadori answered Endou-sensei, and then to Miss Satake next to her, “It’s Russian. The other homunculus are also named based on it. The word meek means ‘instance’ here.”

“Ah, Russian? Now that you mention it, it does seem that way. No, it’s not like I understand Russian in any way.”

“Heh, that’s amazing of you, Miss Nitadori!”

Both of them looked impressed.

And I started to feel dizzy.

It just sounded like Meek was explaining about Meek. We’ve going beyond 2-D and 3-D. What’s going on?

“So Miss Nitadori, how far have you read?”

No way could she conceal this fact anymore. Meek--no, Nitadori speaking as Meek answered pretentiously, “I’ve basically read everything that was published...my friend at my previous school recommended it to me...it’s rather interest.”

“It’s going to be an anime now! You’re looking forward to it, right?”

“Y-yeah...I’m looking forward to it.”

Nitadori answered. Yep, she’s involved in it too.

“So, who’s voicing Meek?”

“...News aren’t out, so it’s hard to tell.”

Nitadori answered using Meek’s voice. Yep, it’s this one here.

“Who do you think is most suited?”

Is Miss Satake asking while knowing? Is she the niece of the producer or something? Did she know everything already!?

I guessed, but it's a small possibility, so I just gave up on guessing.

I was curious as to how Nitadori would answer. Would she try to slip away by diverting the topic or something?

“I think--”

I pricked my ears for 'Meek's words.

"I think it's for the one who loves Meek more than anyone else."

A few seconds later, I was called out by Endou-sensei, who said to me

"What's the matter? You seem really happy there."

I raised my folded paper, and for the first time, I spoke up in this classroom.

"Feels good to be folding."

To correct myself.

I was thoroughly stunned by Miss Satake, who doesn't intend to push the topic towards me for the time being.

But even so, I had no need to rattle the snake.

I continued to work silently. I didn't hate this simple chore. I had a look at the watch, and found that there were approximately twenty minutes left.

Endou-sensei moved the completed pamphlets to another table, before returning to his seat.

"So about Vice Versa--"

Ah, looks like he wants to continue.

Well, whatever, do as you please. I don't care about whatever I hear, and I won't be shocked.

"The focus of the future developments should be, how will 'Shin' change?"

Gulps.

I did not have anything in my mouth, but it felt as though something was stuck in my throat.

Miss Satake said,

"Eh? This '[Shin'...is 'Makoto', right? Not 'Sin'?"

"Yeah, I'm referring to Makoto. Setting wise, he is an ordinary high school boy, but I'm guessing that his 'background' is not that simple. I'm guessing that Makoto will become an amazing final boss, and will battle Sin for the future of Reputation."

"Eh?" "Eh?"

Miss Satake and Nitadori echoed in unison. The latter's voice was back to being Nitadori.

On the other hand, it's summer, but I felt a chill down my back. Then, I felt completely bedridden, unable to move, unable to do anything.

"No, it's just something I randomly thought off--"

The heartless story prediction from Endou-sensei barged into my frozen years.

"Reputation is Earth in the future. The story mentioned that in history, 'Two Great Kings' had a battle of the fates, right? That's why I think those two are Makoto and Sin."

"I see!" "..."

P-Please don't continue now, sensei...

"At the end of the eighth volume, Makoto ended up fighting Sin, and finally won, right?"

"Yes." "Yes."

Miss Satake aside, even Nitadori answered enthusiastically.

"While the volume never provided a specific description, why did the weak

Makoto beat the immortal Sin--"

Of course, that's because I smoked my way through on purpose.

"It should be a foreshadowing for a future plotpoint. Makoto's able to use magic, or something like that, even though he's in modern Japan."

Warrrrgh.

I wish a certain somebody can send a bomber jet to fly in the skies about, and start an air raid siren here. I'll pay for the gas.

But this little wish of mine never come to pass.

Endou-sensei didn't know how the author, just centimeters away from him, was sweating away. He continued his clear analysis.

"Makoto's mother is a kind one, but she has something hidden. I was wondering if she was actually Makoto's actual mother. Thus, I felt that in the second volume, the way his mother accepted Sin was a foreshadowing disguised as a comedy."

"Oh!" "Oh!"

The two girls stopped working, giving strong reactions. As for me, who's next to me--

I was wondering if I should hire an assassin to shut Endou-sensei. Like asking for a 13 year old tractor. (TN: Golgo 13) "I've been thinking about Makoto's name 'Shin Tsumizono'. There are two words that can be represented by 'Sin' in his name."

"Eh?" "Eh?"

"Of course, the first one is the 'tsumi' in the family name that sounds like 'sin'. I guess this is a reason why the author used the nonexistent family name Tsumizono. The second is to read 'Makoto' as 'Sin'. In English, 'sin' means that, right? Well, that goes for 'Sin' too."

"Oh!" "Oh!"

Well, however you want to analyze and dissect, do as you please.

I started working. How do I quickly fold the papers accurately? I started to

compete against myself.

"That's amazing sensei! How detailed did you read the story? How many times have you reread 'Vice Versa'?"

Miss Satake asked.

"Hm, at least five times or so."

Endou-sensei replied in a manner that was hard to tell if he was being humble or boastful.

But to be honest, I was really happy.

Including the ninth volume released in March, to be able to reread so many times is a lot. For an author, reading that deep into the work is something wonderful.

I suddenly showed a smile. At this moment, the girl next to me yelled,

"I read it ten times!"

Ah!

Why compete about this right now, Stella!?"

Stella Hamilton's probably someone a bit more foolish than I thought...

She's probably the ridiculous type of person to act on emotions and not care about the consequences, I guess? Like choking someone.

Well, leaving that aside.

"What, that's amazing!"

Miss Satake seemed rather impressed.

"You're pretty thorough with it. I admit defeat."

Endou-sensei responded. Since when did it become a competition?

Excluding me, the three of them got on well. What's with this atmosphere?

I had a look at the watch. Since we couldn't finish all the pamphlets, I felt that if I toughed it out, I could escape to the cafeteria. At the very least, I really wanted to run away.

While folding, I guessed Miss Satake didn't try to talk to me as Nitadori followed.

"Sensei--"

Speaking to Endou-sensei wasn't Miss Satake, but Nitadori, and I jolted.

I tried to remain calm and listen in on their conversation.

"What is it, Nitadori?"

"When you mentioned about the 'Vice Versa' author, you were only half done, right? I was curious about that..."

Ah, me too.

*"Also, this author is a little..."*

Endou-sensei once said.

Did Nitadori ask for my sake?

If that's the case, I want to take back the 'she's kinda stupid statement', and prostate myself before her to apologize.

"Ah, that."

Endou-sensei kept tapping at the stapling machine. What will he say?

"Well, it is my personal viewpoint. I do feel this author--"

Endou-sensei's pretty sharp in his analysis. I was really looking forward to what he had to say.

Whether he's on the mark, it's interesting, so i really was looking forward.

What's Endou-sensei's answer.

"His view on life and death is a little weird."

What? That?

"His view on life and death is a little weird"--what do you mean?"

Nitadori asked.

I had lost all interest, and looked towards the watch.

"I don't know if I'm right or not. When listening please be mentally prepared."

Endou-sensei cautiously chose his words as he led off, before answering,

"In 'Vice Versa', those that were transported to the other world wouldn't die, basically immortal. Even after the head's gone, blown into ash, they're still able to revive. Writing a world where 'death doesn't matter' can be considered some form of fantasy."

"Yes, that's right."

"I understand."

Miss Satake and Nitadori chimed in.

I think that in 'Vice Versa', the author used the 'can't die' concept to depict the plot in a calm, objective manner. It's really obvious in Shin's actions after he was transported to Reputation. For me, though many characters were slaughtered without mercy, the 'value of life' to the protagonist who had witnessed this was very light to begin with."

Endou-sensei continued with his analysis,

"I don't know if I'm able to convey this successfully. In any case, I just feel that for this author, the concept of 'loving each unique life' isn't really there--for this author, whom I presume is still young, what experiences allowed him to write such a work with a weak sense of life? That's what I'm curious about."

"Hm."

Miss Satake sounded as though she didn't understand at all.

And even I couldn't understand what he was getting at.

I could understand what the teacher was trying to get at, but I just felt that he wasn't able to properly convey his opinions to others.

"Erm--"

At this moment, Nitadori's voice trailed off.

If she was concerned about me, all she had to do was to show surprise.

After about ten seconds of silence, Nitadori thanked him, despite not exactly understanding what he meant.

"I don't really understand...but thank you."



The minute hand of the clock finally showed ten minutes left.

It should be time, right about time.

I proposed to Endou-sensei that it's time to end, and intended to escape. Time to run. I tried saying this cool English term. I should be correct here, right?

Today's fourth period was really tedious, but since it's ending, I'm pretty happy.

I got caught in Miss Satake's plot, and lost several years of my life due to fright, but I also found an unexpected side to Endou-sensei, and Nitadori actually being serious.

I neatly folded the last piece of paper, and quickly got up.

"So we should be done right? If we go to the canteen now, we won't have to queue much."

I suddenly spoke up, and Endou-sensei seemed rather taken aback,

"Ah? Ahhh--of course. The time is well spent. Thanks to the three of you. You're dismissed."

But he finally said the words to release us. A light.

I was about to take the first step out, but Miss Satake took the initiative.

"Ah, let's go to the canteen together!"

I see. So this is her objective...

No wonder she didn't do anything when we were working.

At the exit of the cave before me, the metal shutters slowly closed up.

"Eh? Why?"

I immediately answered, which I felt was rude of me, but Miss Satake took no heed to the jab.

"Since we have some spare time, it's fine to go to the canteen once in a while."

"Oh, and your bento?"

I remembered that Miss Satake would bring her bento every day.

"Actually, I forgot to bring it today."

She's definitely lying, but I can't just tell her,

"That's not true!"

"It's my first time going to the canteen. Please tell me which one to order!"

Ah, she's definitely coming along.

On a side note, I recommend the fried beef rice.

While curry rice is nice, I love the beef rice. The sweet taste of onions--no, it doesn't matter.

I'm a goner.

There's no way to run, and I can't ask Nitadori for help.

To be honest, I have nowhere to go.

I'm doomed.

"If you are being too unreasonable, he might be feeling troubled, no?"

In the end, I couldn't do anything other than to have nitadori speak up for me. She was on the chair, being cold and ruthless.

"Eh? Is that so?"

Miss Satake chopped, but those words could be read as,

"Oh, how annoying. Is it any of your business?"

It's scary. I really want to run away.

Following this, at the next second, something startling happened.

"Oh, I hope you three will get along well."

Endou-sensei said, and hurried towards the door.

"No need to lock the door. Nobody will steal these."

After That, he said these words before leaving. He got away.

I understood very well

That like me, Endou-sensei really hates troublesome things!

This teacher is unreliable! No, doesn't that make me the same? He's the one fast at running. Why can't I do that?

I was quietly rattled over and over again, but it was pointless.

I had to break through this crisis in my own way, and get away from here.

Just like the time when I woke up in the infirmary.

Well, if that was a 'remain terms of severity, this would be a 'four', no, a 'five'.

And so Miss Satake stood before the table, between me and the exit.

"Since you have read 'Vice Versa', Miss Nitadori, aren't you curious about what was read before the tests? Meek will die after all! And then she'll revive! No, she's not exactly reviving immediately, but she will be!"

She's saying this excitedly, probably for real.

"If what sensei said about 'Shin being the final demon king' is correct, Shin will become a really strong homunculus capable of reviving Meek, and at the very end, he'll have her become an ally of his!"

Miss Satake proceeded to guess the following plotline.

Yeah, I thought about that, and the editor-in-charge agreed to it.

"I'm not going to die until I solve this mystery!"

Ah, that's an exaggeration there.

She won't die immediately.

Well, there isn't a zero possibility of Miss Satake being afflicted with some serious illness. No, looking at how energetic she is, I guess she's not sick.

Anyone who read the plot afterwards can solve the mystery to this story.

As an author, I'm pretty...no, very happy about Miss Satake's feelings. She loves this work so much, and is so looking forward to the later developments. It makes me really happy.

I didn't know if I was troubled, or gleeful. Miss Satake continued to attack me without mercy, "But if it's a web novel, of course I want to read it! I too want to know how to find this!"

Surely as a fan, I would have the same thoughts. Thus, I understood Miss Satake's feelings.

"I'll be working hard for this! Really! Even if the one who knows this has an intention to hide, I'm going to find and reveal everything."

Miss Satake's personality is probably the same as her appearance. I might say that she was intending to reveal the truth, rather than attack Nitadori.

And if I'm a fan, I'll probably work hard for the same reasons. What she wanted to do, was what I want to do.

Right when I was spacing out, Miss Satake smiled at me, saying,

"So let's go eat together."

Eh? That's a quick resolution.

I thought she would say some cool lines from a passionate fan, and it disappointed me. She could have continued. It's not too late to start now?

So then, Miss Satake seemed to have realized my thoughts, and rejected that notion as she turned towards Nitadori.

"Actually, I've already understood what you're thinking, Miss Nitadori. I know why you're working so hard to stop me."

Eh? Really?

"Eh?"

I was quietly taken aback, while Nitadori exclaimed in surprise.

Did she see through everything.

Was she trying to say that everything Nitadori and I did were recorded somewhere, and seen.

With both of us looking, Miss Satake said with the look of a famous detective who had realized the truth, "Miss Nitadori's... 'the kind of person who don't want to know rumors beforehand', right?"

Eh?

"Eh?"

"During that recital, I was looking at the reader in surprise, and found Miss Nitadori behind looking a conflicted look. She's showing a sad, elated look when she learned that 'Meek may revive'. It looked like she was holding back her tears."

I see! Thank you for telling me this! Miss Satake!

"..."

"Back then, I understood that Nitadori was watching 'Vice Versa' too."

This is correct.

"And then, I understand immediately! She's the sort of person who 'doesn't want to know the spoilers beforehand'."

This petite detective raised her right index finger, her gleeful look very cute even--

But she was dead wrong.

This bespectacled high school girl who loves horse sashimi read my manuscripts because she wanted to know what happened after. She wanted to know everything relating to Meek.

"..." "

Both of us remained silent. This silence lasted for about five seconds.

Miss Satake probably assumed she was correct, and carried on,

"Nitadori doesn't want to know what happens afterwards, and is preventing me from asking. As for why, that's because if I do, she'll hear whatever I share with the classmates! Spoilers!"

No no, that definitely didn't happen.

I guess Nitadori should be very enthusiastic if someone's to discuss the later plot of 'Vice Versa'. She'll be baited like a fish without feed when fishing.

After thinking too much, I was really tired.

I didn't know what I should say. I could actually think of all kinds of conversations I want in the novel. My knowledge and experience would be insufficient in escaping this crisis. The only successful moment was probably the moment in the infirmary.

If I activate the 'time to play' I showed back then, I should be able to pass through this crisis, I guess?

With my mind already lethargic as I thought, I checked my memories, saying, "That's a grave misunderstanding, Miss Satake. Nitadori's here not because she doesn't want you and me to be together."

"Oh, so?"

"..."

The two girls stared at me.

Without a care, I lied,

"Well, Nitadori's my girlfriend."

So why did I say these words?"

## Chapter 3-2 - June 5, I became his girlfriend

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

Why is sensei looking so blissful?

Why is he looking so happy?

Why is he looking so peaceful?

He's like a baby looking up at his mother, doted by him.

I just found--

Him to be very cute.

While I was strangling him.

"Well, Nitadori's my girlfriend."

I felt that I was hammered in the head.

The scenery in my vision started to sway, and I nearly fell over.

If I had not been seated on a chair, I would have fallen over as I could not grab the table.

"Ehh!?"

Miss Satake squealed so loudly, my eardrums were nearly broken.





"What's going on!? H-hey, please explain everything! You're willing to explain, right!? That's why you're willing to say!"

I understood that the sudden topic about romance had caused Miss Satake's pitch and blood pressure to rise.

Feeling groggy, I just heard sensei lie boldly.

"Well, since I said that much, I'm going to spill the beans, but don't tell anyone, okay? If you let others know, I'll really look down on you, Miss Satake."

"I-I understand..."

Miss Satake timidly responded to the rather stiff toned sensei.

"Well, Nitadori's my pen pal. We knew each other since two years ago."

Sensei said.

Well, some extras were added, but it's basically the truth.

As a fan, I sent sensei a letter, and received a one sentence reply. In that sense, we met each other.

But the relationship between us never improved. Sensei's the one lying that went "She's my girlfriend", so it's not weird for the listener to interpret accordingly and be fooled.

"Eh, eh...is that so?"

Miss Satake asked.

I didn't know if she did believe sensei's words, but she showed no look of suspicion.

"I had to stop schooling for a year, due to some reasons. When I was finally able to do so, Nitadori told me about this school. "There's a private High School that doesn't have much issues with attendance. I too started attending last year. I think it might be suitable for you--what do you think?"

This isn't the truth.

"So that's why I transferred into this school. Of course, the good is that I'm able to attend the same school as her. I never expected our class to be the same, but since there are three classes, the chances are basically one in three."

Sensei just went ahead with improved liars. It's what this 'liar' in me said, so it's pretty convincing.

"So we decided to keep our good relationship a secret. That's why we never spoke to each other."

That's pretty smart too.

He never said 'we're dating', but 'we're on good terms', so he's not completely lying. As for 'secret' and 'not saying anything', those are facts though.

Sensei's probably in the flow of things as he peppered some facts in the lies, able to continue talking, and had no need to lie.

I know sensei's becoming more and more used to lying.

"But I can't talk to other girls alone. I can't hide this from Nitadori. Knowing and doing is a further no go. Miss Satake, do you understand why Nitadori's trying to stop you?"

I knew sensei was lying.

But for me, it was the truth.

"Or do you want to butt in, Miss Satake? How about it?"

Sensei's like a different person, saying such forceful words.

"W-well, in that case."

Miss Satake lowered her reddened face. It seemed she's not the kind of weak-willed girl to be beaten however.

She lifted her head, looking very suspicious.

"But...it's kinda hard to believe so suddenly. Both of you don't seem to be on that good terms."

"Really? Well, I don't have any proof, but you should know I can't go to the cafeteria with you. If I do--I'll get strangled by Nitadori."

So I shouted instinctively,

"Don't mention that!"

"Ahaha, sorry!"

I saw sensei give a natural smile, and understood.

Sensei said those words to get a reaction from me.

Till this point, everything was according to sensei's plan.

In that case, i could only play along.

I quickly took a deep breath.

"Goodness! I just relaxed, and you're doing that again--I'm going to tell everyone in class of the secret if you keep this up. Hey, you fine with that? Really?"

I was fuming at the front part, not holding back in my tone. At the back part, I was grumbling like a lovey-dovey person.

No script, no rehearsals, but I felt it was a new act. This sort of thing is trivial to me.

"Do-don't do that..."

"Goodness...you dummy..."

After playing along with sensei for the final act, I said to Miss Satake, "Sorry to hide this from you. That's how it is, it's hard to say this..."

The trick's to give a really apologetic look.

"Of course, we won't order you to remain quiet. Sooner or later, we'll reveal to everyone, so before then, if you're willing to keep this a secret. I'll be really happy. Of course, we won't force you, and we can't do anything even if you return to the classroom and declare this to everyone."

The trick is to be humble and give an apologetic look, showing a hardened stance and have her understand that 'if you do that, your reputation' will drop'.

"We-well, in that case...anyway, I don't have any intention to snatch anyone's boyfriend..."

Miss Satake showed a conflicted look.

Without her looking, sensei showed an awkward look, his hands giving a

victory pose.

I felt that he was saying, please continue acting, until the cut.

And like the knockout bell of a boxing match, the bell signalling the end of the long fourth period rang.

## Chapter 3-3 - June 5, I ate potato chips

The fried beef rice I had for lunch is the best I ever had.

There's a sense of relief. Over the next two years, every day when I have it at school, I'll probably remember this day.

After that, while there's the fifth and sixth period, Miss Satake never spoke to me.

It seemed she never declared this in class.

There's only one problem.

Was Nitadori fuming at me...

And without knowing what was behind me, I sat through the next two hours of class.

Homeroom ended, and I immediately darted out.

And then, on the train, I met Nitadori again.

She straightened her hair,

"Here!"

She shoved the convenience store bag to me with a grim, furious look.

"I'm! Very! Sleepy! Sleep!"

After these four words, she just sat down, and tilted the chair back.

With that moment, she shut her eyelids hard.

"..."

I was holding the bag, probably stunned.

Miss Kamishiro, seated next to me, was like usual, giving a cool look--

But it seemed she was being kind today.

I did say that to 'escape', but to deem 'Nitadori' a girlfriend, it's no wonder she's furious.

I wanted to use this chance to get away, but she fell asleep.

Even this dull-witted me could understand.

"I'm angry today. I don't want to talk." that's what she meant.

With this, Nitadori spent three weeks sleeping. It's only on the train that I got the chance to talk with her properly. This is bad.

She's that angry.

I guess I should apologize at this time next week.

Left with no choice, I decided to have a piece of potato chip before sleeping.

At this moment, I got hungry. Even I was embarrassed by this.

Trying not to make a sound, I took a potato chip from the bag.

"..."

I stared at the bag of potato chips for three seconds, and slowly opened the pack.

It's been years since I ate the Consomme flavor again--

It's pretty nice.

So I thought.

Starting next week, I guess it's fine to eat this.

## Chapter 3-4 - June 5, I slept in the train

That day, on the car ride to the station--

I informed Miss Akane of everything that happened in school.

I explained carefully, right until the car was about to reach the station. I was wondering if I should buy some potato chips. Time was running out.

Once the car was close enough for the station to be seen, I asked her from the back seat, "So, how do you think I should be seated on the train...?"

With her poised attitude, Miss Akane answered from the driver seat, "What else--like usual, no?"

"You mean?"

"Sensei lied to deal with that situation, just like what happened in the infirmary, right?"

"I-I guess..."

"Not a guess, that's actually the case."

"S-so, in fact, sensei never thought of me as a 'girlfriend'--?"

"No."

"He might have some thought like that in his heart!"

"No."

"..."

"If you're feeling curious, Milady, you can ask him yourself. As him 'why are you still willing to forgive me after I choked you', and then ask. In other words, you have more things to ask about. That's why your situation is the same as before, Milady."

She was too reasonable, and I could not refute.

Miss Akane is always like this, never running away from the problem before her. Or rather, she would tackle the problem head on.

I really hoped to become a strong woman like her one day, a person able to express herself freely no matter who she's facing.

"Alright, we're here. Going to the convenience store?"

Miss Akane stopped, and I barely managed to express what I was thinking, "I-I don't feel...like taking that train today..."

"Seriously, how old are you? You can't be acting that stubborn like a child now."

She responded.

"But!"

"Okay okay, I understand how you feel, but the car doesn't have enough fuel to reach Tokyo. This is troublesome, and it just so happens that I don't have enough money on hand."

"I'll pay with my credit card."

"Great for me, but I'm pretty tired. I don't have the confidence to drive all the way down to Tokyo safely."

"I'll drive then! Give me the key!"

"You can't drive in Japan now. Okay, we're getting off."

Miss Akane intended to open the driver door.

"Wait! Please let me confirm something!!"

I asked with the loudest voice I made.

This was the one thing I had to ask first.

"Just one thing. If we can't make it to the train, it's not a funny thing."

Miss Akane closed the door that was 3 centimeters open.

"Thank you--just now, about what Endou-sensei said that 'for a young person, this author's view on life and death is weird', what do you think?"

"..."



Miss Akane went silent, a rarity from her. After about five seconds of silence, she said, "I never read 'Vice Versa', so I don't know the validity of that statement..."

I steeled myself,

"But even though he was nearly killed, he just forgave with a smile. I do believe the view of life and death for such people isn't normal."

Miss Akane said what I was thinking after all.

Ever since then, what Endou-sensei said about 'a weird view on life and death' lingered in my head.

With tense steps, I strutted towards the convenience store, and Miss Akane dragging the luggage bag told me bluntly, "Enough with the chit-chat and get straight to the point."

It seems she was suggesting to me not to buy any biscuits as a snack, but to buy a donut.

But if I could do so, I would not be so bothered.

Sooner or later however, i will have to face this trouble.

Also, today's a good chance, right?

First off, I had to check the validity about the girlfriend.

"Sorry, sorry."

Once sensei apologizes, I'll gain the upperhand.

"Speaking of which, please tell me. Why are you willing to forgive me even though you nearly got killed by me?"

So I just had to ask this question casually...

Well, things do seem like they'll proceed smoothly.

No, they will.

No problems.

I can do it!

I shouted in the convenience store,

"Okay!"

As for the potato chips I was going to buy, I intended to buy some Consomme flavor.

I would have him eat my favorite flavor, and turn the tide of the situation to my side.

I had a feeling of victory.

When Miss Akane woke me up, sensei was still sleeping.

And there were only four minutes until the terminal.

Like usual, Miss Akane said calmly,

"Shall we get going then?--There's still a chance next week."

# Chapter 4-1 - June 12, I didn't take the train

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, strangled by my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress.

This is my current predicament.

I was wondering.

Maybe I should let go.

I felt I shouldn't have Nitadori--

Continue to choke me.

I felt that I was forcing her.

No, in fact, I was forcing her.

It's not good to do this.

I shouldn't have my hand on a girl's, having her continue to choke me.

June 12th, Thursday.

On this day, the After Record of the eleventh episode was about to begin--

But I didn't board the Limited Express.

No, to be precise, I couldn't take the Limited Express.

While the train departed from the station, I was lying on my bed, sleeping at home.

I did not oversleep my nap time, and did not skip the After Record because I hated the work, and it's definitely not that I didn't want to go to Tokyo because I wanted to avoid Nitadori.

So what's the reason?

I had a fever.

“I feel that my head’s shaking. Is it an earthquake?”

On that day, I started to wonder.

I woke up at the same time as per usual, saw that mom, who was on night duty throughout this week, had returned home to sleep, and ate breakfast.

School’s pretty near to my house.

Starting this week, I did not hurry into school at the last moment because of Miss Satake. Until Wednesday, I was able to arrive at school earlier, and spend the time lazing in the classroom, reading.

But on my way to school, there was an earthquake.

Probably a two or three in magnitude, I guess? I found myself swaying about even though I was walking.

That was an omen--

All I did was to stop in my tracks, and check my smartphone for any earthquake occurrence.

Back then, I should have thought of entering the infirmary rather than the classroom.

Once class started, I started to feel the earth shake from time to time. As I could not use the smartphone in class (while some would secretly have a peek), whenever it shook, all I felt was, ""Why hasn't anyone sensed this earthquake? Doesn't anyone care?"

Soon after, I actually ended up thinking,

"Does this mean I'm the only one able to sense an earthquake a day early? Am I able to detect continuous earthquakes before they happen? Do I have precognition? Will I predict a massive accident in the near future, and be wondering how to inform everyone? So I end up preventing the incident, become a hero, prevent more incidents and accidents, received a large sum of money from the country, and live a leisurely life.

On a certain day three years later, I was targeted by a foreign spy hoping to capitalize on this ability for military purposes. Nevertheless, I managed to avoid all forms of crisis through my precognition, and fell in love with the heroine who happened. While I sensed a perfectly wonderful ending was about to come, I foresaw that I would die the next day, and went pale as a result. Having predicted everything to 100% accuracy, would I be able to avoid this looming fate--

Thinking back about it, it was a grave mistake, that my delusions were out of control.

And I did not realize that I was burning up.

After the third period ended.

(I guess) the matter about Miss Satake was resolved, and I didn't need to run to the toilet.

During recess, I sat on the chair. For some reason, I did not want to stroll about.

The boy seated before me shoved his textbooks into the drawer, and was intending to head out to the back door, only to stop at the last moment.

I looked up, and met him in the eyes.

Somehow, I could still remember the name of the person seated before me. This boy of average size and neat brown hair was called 'Aizawa'.

It's a rare family name, and there's the word 'Ai' for 'love', which seemed cool to me (though I didn't know what he thought of the name).

During classes, I would be seated between Aizawa and Nitadori, two people with very interesting names.

When the semester started, there was a girl with a common family name over there, but before i knew it, she changed her seat.

The reason why that girl ended up sitting at the front side was because 'she could not see the blackboard clearly due to short-sightedness', or something like that.

Or maybe,

"That seat is filled with an evil presence. I can't take it."

Probably not.

Well, leaving that aside, I just had a curious thought. What does Aizawa want with me?

Of course, I never had a proper chat with him.

During the two months and so on, all Aizawa did was to hand me the worksheets from the front, and say, "Here."

Seeing how he was speaking in formal language, I could guess he was trying to talk to me. Is there seriously something though?

If he's going to talk about my delusional brain, well, I get him, and I get that it probably won't get cured, so I wanted to say it's fine, that I'll continue living on with this brain of mine.

"Your face is really red."

"Huh?"

What? Does Aizawa think I'm the type to blush upon seeing a man? If you say that, the illustrator of 'Vice Versa' will be very happy, so no! That was what I immediately thought.

"...Yeah, and you're shaking."

Following that, a familiar voice came from behind. It's Nitadori's.

"I guess."

Aizawa agreed with Nitadori. She got up, went to his side, and looked at my face.

And then, she said to me,

"Erm...are you having a fever?"

For the first time in my life, I heard Nitadori speak to me in class.

This would be something worth commemorating, but it's not the time to think about it.

My face's red, and my head's shaking. I might have a fever.

While I wouldn't say I distrust Aizawa, but since Nitadori said so, that might be the case. The frequent earthquakes might be due to myself. Mystery solved!

So I thought.

"Ah, yes, I guess...I'll head to the infirmary."

I slowly got to my feet. It seemed I was fine walking.

"Yeah, I should be able to go alone. Thanks, you two."

Saying that, I left the two worried ones behind in the classroom.

For my first trip to the infirmary in this school, I had my temperature taken. If the thermometer was not faulty in any way, I had a fever of almost thirty nine degrees Celsius.

I nearly broke the mark there. I was ordered to rest on the bed.

I could not remember how many years had it been since I rested on the bed. I did not remember such an experience.

Good thing I had a strong body, and never had a major illness or injury as a result.

Looking at the unfamiliar ceiling was an interesting experience, but before I knew it, I fell asleep.

I was woken up by the bell at the end of the fourth period, and the nurse saw that my fever had yet to subside completely, saying, "I will notify your homeroom teacher. Head home for now."

Upon inquiring my home address, the nurse learned that I lived nearby, and heaved a sigh of relief.

I continued to walk down the 'tremoring' corridor, and returned to the classroom during noon break.

Nitadori and Aizawa were at their seats, having their lunches. I, who preferred to eat at the cafeteria, saw how the class was like during noon break for the first time.

While tidying my bag, I said,

"I really have a fever. Going back first. Thanks guys."

I wasn't intending to direct this to any one of them, but to both of them instead.

"Ah, it's fine. Please take care."

Aizawa said. Now I know he's a nice guy.

"Understood. I shall inform the teacher."

Nitadori in turn spoke in an official manner.

So I got the rare experience to 'talk with Nitadori in the classroom', only to return home eight minutes later.

It was around 1pm.

Mom, ready to go to work, measured my body temperature for a second time. It was over thirty eight degrees celsius, so she had me take some medication, followed by isotonic drinks. As to be expected of mom, straight to the point.

I changed into pajamas, and laid on the bed.

I wondered how I got a fever, but in fact, I already realized.

On the previous night, right after a long bath--

With wet hair, and dressed in boxers, I was seated at the living room just a curtain beyond the balcony, tapping at the keyboard as I wanted to record an idea I had in the changing room.

While the night wind felt comfy, it's not good for the body after all.

Even with the slight fever, I was able to think properly.

So I thought, until that moment came,

"Ah!"



While lying on the bed, I saw the calendar, on the wall, and noticed something. I took my smartphone out to check.

I realized it was Thursday. I had to head to Tokyo that evening.

Before then, I had been wondering if it was Wednesday. I even told myself, completely relaxed, that I had to be recovered by the following evening. It's all the fever's fault.

I hurriedly got up from bed, and told mom, who was at the corridor, ready to go to work--

But naturally, she ordered me to take a rest.

I returned to my room, and made a call to the editor-in-charge.

I reported the current situation to him, and asked him what I should do.

I wanted to watch the After Records, even if I had to force myself out of bed--

So the editor-in-charge told me that the body's most important, that I should rest.

But I would not budge.

"While I do understand how you feel...that you may think you are fine, but as an author, you cannot be spreading germs at the After Record."

I gave up upon hearing those words.

I could not cause trouble for any of the voice actors, who earned their keeps through their voices.

The Limited Express ticket was bought at the station that day, so I could leave it for the time being (once I transfer the receipt to the editor, I could claim the money); I just needed to cancel the hotel reservation.

While ASCII Media Works had booked the room for me, I was wondering how the expenses would be after cancellation.

After that, I chatted with the editor regarding several things.

I received the script the previous week, and had done the checks as an

author. There was no part to be changed.

And as for the meeting regarding the 11th volume that was to be released in September, it was done during the previous After Record. Thank goodness.

In other words, I had no issues, except for missing out the goal of 'attending all the recording sessions for a first animated adaptation'.

"Please rest well and get well. It's an old adage, but taking care of your body is part of work."

I quietly sighed, hung up, and spaced out.

In fact, since March, it was the first time I did not spend a Thursday night in Tokyo, which I had done so over the past ten weeks.

"I'm never typing at the computer right after a shower, and in my boxers."

So I quietly made this decision in my heart. As the medication was making me drowsy, I decided to sleep, and fidgeted about as I laid down.

I closed my eyes.

After five seconds, I opened my eyes again.

I opened them really hard. There was someone I had to contact.

I had her number and mail address. It's lesson time, and I should send by mail.

Thus far, Nitadori and I had only exchanged one message. All I did was to reply to hers, not much content either.

Also, I angered her as I declared 'she's my girlfriend' the previous week. While I could not apologize to her in the recording studio or classroom, but I had no guts to settle this through mail.

I thought it would be a perfect opportunity on the train, but my body was not in a good condition.

The medication was really taking effect.

I hardly took medication, so once I did, the effects would be immediate, and I would feel like sleeping.

My mind was having difficulty in thinking. If I did not know what to write.

The more I angsted, the more difficulty I had in writing, and the drowsier I got.

So I simply sent her a formal-looking message before sleeping.

## Chapter 4-2 - June 12, I took the green train, after not doing so for a while

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

I no longer understand.

Why am I strangling sensei?

I want to let go.

But why doesn't sensei want to let go.

Is sensei grabbing my hands that are strangling him from both sides?

I don't understand.

June 24th, Thursday.

When third period ended.

"Erm, are you alright? Your face is really red."

Aizawa, two seats before me, said so, and affirmed my belief that sensei wasn't feeling right.

From the first to third period, his back and back where shaking. To be honest, whenever he shook, my attention was taken by 'him', no matter how unwilling I was, and I was troubled.

Of course, the reason being--

That I had to apologize to sensei, but delayed the apology for more than two weeks.

I felt that in school, I should not talk to sensei at all, let alone in the classroom. However, there's an exception to everything.

My decision was that it was an exception. Thus, I spoke to sensei, through Aizawa as a proxy.

I went forward to check on sensei, and found his face to be obviously red. He's probably having a fever.

I wanted to touch his forehead with my hand, but gave up on this thought. I'm a normal girl with a lower body temperature. No matter whose forehead I touch, it'll definitely feel hot.

Sensei said he would be going to the infirmary, and I gave up the urge to follow as I watched him leave.

Once he did leave, Aizawa suddenly spoke me to while I intended to return to my seat.

"How's he like?"

"Eh?"

I exclaimed, and stared at Aizawa, who seemed a little surprised, "...Didn't you help the teacher out with something just a few days back? I think you did talk about something, so I ask."

"Ah, I see..."

Aizawa has a girlfriend in this class called 'Nishi'. They started dating since last Christmas. All the girls in class know.

Thus, if I tell Aizawa, he might tell Nishi. At this point, Satake is willing to keep this fake secret, but Aizawa and Nishi might not. I can't beg them.

I can't reveal too much, but I can't not answer. I can't let him know what I know.

And to avoid him thinking this way, I cautiously said, "I was talking with Satake and Endou-sensei. Sensei's rather surprising though. As for him...well, he was just working away quietly."

"Hm...doesn't he feel lonely? He's older than everyone by a year, and can't

talk to anyone every day..."

I was always a liar, always acting, so I habitually had the skeptical notion 'aren't everyone else the same?'. Personally, it's the worst habit possible.

But I didn't think Aizawa was hiding anything at this point.

If I'm not being bluffed, he's probably worried for the upperclassman seated behind him.

If I deal with this well--

Aizawa might use this opportunity to chat with sensei amicably.

But I don't understand.

Is this what sensei wants?

And is this what I want?

So I tried my best to act concerned, saying, "Hm...I guess it's up to him. It's different from telling him that he has a fever..."

"Hm, I guess so..."

Aizawa muttered, and once he heard his friend call for him, "bye then" he vanished before my eyes.

It seemed sensei was sleeping in the infirmary for a while, and finally returned to the classroom at noon break, thanking us with a red face, and went home early.

I was a little worried.

Not only for his health. What do I do when I head to Tokyo?

Regarding the script inspection, sensei can simply contact the editorial branch if there's a need to change. With so many volumes other there, there shouldn't be a need for new intonation.

There shouldn't be any issues. Nobody should be affected.

Except for one person.

"I got to apologize properly today and figure out there truth! Over the next

two and a half hours, I can't run away. I'm going to face sensei properly."

And having made up my mind.

I lost motivation to attend class. Once lessons ended, I opened the smartphone, and found a sent message.

It was from sensei.

*"I had a nice nap, all fine well! I'll ride the usual train. Can't be skipping the After Record. Let's continue chatting happily on the train."*

That was what I believed sensei would write. I kept using my phone, only to see this message.

*"Unfortunately, I can't go this week. No need for my potato chips this week. Thanks for your help in class. I'm sleepy after taking the medication. Going to sleep. Goodbye.."*

I reread the message for another ten times--

Only to see those words again.

The seats on the green carriage, which I had not taken for more than two months, were spacious and comfy.

Being able to switch the seat heater on and off is a unique park to the green carriage, but I supposed there is no need for that.

The last time I took it, the weather was cold, and in a moment of interest, I tried it. Two months and so passed in an instant.

The weather outside the window's really nice, and so is the blue sky; I can see the hills clearly. Where did the plum rain go?

The train began to accelerate, and there was some level of noise inside the carriage. With the noise echoing, I said to Miss Akane, who was on the aisle-side of the twin-seater.

"I'm cursed."

"Why?"

She asked. "Nothing much." So I furiously retorted, and explained what happened.

"So I say, Milady, this won't do."

She suddenly pointed out my flaw.

Her lack of restraint is the reason why I respect her.

"Should you not have known this is to be expected when sensei's on sick leave? Please give up. We aren't angels. Most importantly, didn't you receive a rare message from him? First, you need to send him a message showing your concern for him. Once the After Record is done, can't you send another one to report? If it's work related, it should be a natural conversation for you. I really do think you should thank the Gods of fate for allowing you to scale this mountain little by little."

Only then did I realize the term 'speechless' existed for me.

I took out my smartphone.



# Chapter 5-1 - June 19, I invited her to my house

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, strangled by my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress.

This is my current predicament.

Strictly put, this isn't precise.

So I should say..

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, having my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress strangle me.

This is my current predicament.

With my hands outstretched, I firmly grabbed Nitadori's hands on my neck, holding them down.

But I probably had no strength to crush Nitadori's slender, icy hands--

At least my blood won't stop flowing completely.

All I felt was an icy neck. Very comfy.

June 19th, Thursday.

I took the Limited Express, so that I could observe the After Record of the twelfth episode.

Like usual, I arrived at the station early, and waited at the platform.

Like the previous day, the plum rain took a temporary absence. The weather was fine.

The Limited Express slowly leaned its carriages on the platform, and the passengers from Tokyo disembarked. The train personnel quickly cleaned out. To be honest, I always found their work to be arduous.

I was the first to board, and went to the usual seat at the last row, to the left. I placed the backpack next to me, and exhaled.

To be honest, I had no need to do so.

Even if someone did take this seat, all I needed to do was to send a message to Nitadori.

"I didn't get the usual seat. I'll be seated at seat number 00."

She probably won't be mad at me, even if I'm to use such an intimate tone.

We did exchange a few messages this week, and just the previous day, she came to my house.

It started last week.

I had a fever on Thursday, and though I hoped to attend the After Record at Tokyo, I was stopped by the doctor. No, by my mother, who's a nurse, and by the editor-in-charge.

After that, I took some medication, and laid down; after that, I changed into pajamas, and continued to sleep. I woke up again, had some food and medication, waited for the drowsiness to kick in, and went to sleep--

On Friday morning, I woke up, and found my fever to have completely subsided.

While I surely would not have enough time to make it to the After Record, I had plenty of time to attend school.

However, I never knew how to attend school on Fridays. Though I had attended this school for at least two months, I never stepped into the campus of the school on Fridays.

What do I do if an alien exchange student riding an Adamsky-shaped saucer only on Fridays show up? What do I do if the student menu ends up as an

invitation from an alien?

"Hey, I never met you before. Come to the back of the gym. I'll show you my flying saucer."

What do I do if an alien from the second planet of the Parapupa solar system, Henelebochara is to say this to me and not let me go?

What if it's a female who's proposing to me and want to take me there? What will happen?

After making such stupid delusions, I decided not to take the five minutes walk to school, and chose to write my novel as I wished.

Nitadori's message came after 3.30pm,

While writing the continuation of 'Vice Versa', the manuscript of the 12th volume, my smartphone vibrated, indicating a new message. I was wondering that it was probably from the editor, or mom as I used the phone. Then, I saw Nitadori's face.

The message she sent--

Contained cheerful, very formal words showing concern for me.

And also, she mentioned about how the After Record of the 11th episode ended successfully, that like before, the recording of the episode was perfect. The replication of the streets and I had to answer.

With more effort than I exerted the previous time--

I indicated in my reply, I have completely recovered, thank you for worrying about me, I am looking forward to seeing the episode air.

She then answered me quickly, no longer than a minute.

Glad that you have recovered, so she wrote, you looked funny when you were shaking about in class.

Well, I thought there was some frequent quakes going on. Must have been funny to think about it.

So that ended our interaction on Friday, and I quietly went back to work.

Currently, I am writing the twelfth volume of 'Vice Versa', and plotting the outline for the thirteenth volume.

The twelfth volume involves 'Side Sin', when Sin arrives in Japan, and it is a comedy involving the school festival. I had no actual experience of a school festival, so when writing this part, I would distill the various scenes in past novels and anime.

The thirteenth volume is 'Side Shin', a serious story.

The war in the eleventh volume (which included Meek's death) expected Sin's territory, it resulted in new enemies. The major countries afar started to view Sin's country as a threat, and heard that he had an immortal doppelganger, and had the special forces deployed to abduct him.

I had intention to write approximately twenty volumes of the main plot. Thus, to improve it, I had to cook up the mood until it escalates. Also, I had to set up the foreshadowing to the final battle. These foreshadowings were established during the prior meetings I had with the editor.

Thinking of plotlines is certain a delightful thing. I feel really blessed to be able to write this story.

During the three days of weekend, starting Friday, I was cooped in the room, and kept writing, just as I did during my hiatus from school--

And then, I received a message from Nitadori.

It was on Sunday, at about 8pm or so.

It was short.

And it went,

*"You made a promise that I can visit your house, so may I?"*

"Eh, did I make this promise?" For a moment, i was about to tilt my head--

But after a minute, I remembered.

Speaking of which, last month, on the 15th, on the day I was strangled, I did

say these words. What happened thereafter was very impressionable, and that was why it took me some time to recall.

Just to note, the word 'mad' Nitadori used was a typo. It should have been 'made'. If I had submitted the manuscript as it were, there would be a red mark indicated by the proofreader.

In any case, I didn't really mind anyone coming to my house.

For me, the instances of friends coming for house visits only occur in novels, manga and anime, so I was glad, and it might be interesting to showcase my house to my friends.

Currently, my room isn't really messy. Mom's work schedule is shuffled again, like usual, and now she works in the day.

Thus, even though I would have a tight schedule tomorrow, either Tuesday or Wednesday should it'll have to be after school though.

Of course, we couldn't go home together. If we're seen, Nitadori would be in trouble.

Thus, I would head home first.

After that, i would have Nitadori leave the school twenty minutes later, head to the gate of the apartment, and press the apartment number for the doorbell.

I wrote these things in the message, and also added on "no need to hurry with the reply" before sending the message--

After an hour, I received a reply,

"Wednesday then! Looking forward to it!"

Those were the words written.

On Monday and Tuesday, I went to school.

The days were normal, I never spoke to Aizawa, Miss Satake, and of course, not to Nitadori.

With the sounds of the plum rain pelting, I went to school like usual, never spoke to anyone, had my beef bowl, and went home after school.

And then, on Wednesday--

After having lunch in the cafeteria, I received a message from Nitadori.

"Is today ffine? If I'm not intruding, please let me visit as planned. The weather's good."

So she wrote.

Well, she's right. It's in the middle of the plum rain season, but it had been sunny since morning, and I could see the hills clearly. Such weather was clearly suitable for inviting a friend to a house visit. I replied, indicating my agreement.

On the way back, I thought,

Is there something I need to prepare?

I never invited a friend into my house as a visitor. In stories, snacks or juice will probably be served, or maybe cakes.

I started to wonder if there was anything at home--

There should be two, three kinds of juice. Snacks-wise, while I did not have any potato chips, I had cookies. I heaved a sigh relief. To be honest, there wasn't enough time for me to head down to the shop to do some purchases.

I returned home to my apartment at the top floor, and wondered if I should change out from my uniform, only to remain as I was.

At home, I would wear some tattered peats along with a crumpled T-shirt. Even if I do put it nicely, it's not a clean attire. I could not remember when was the time time I washed my clothes.

Though we're friends, she's a girl, can't be rude to her, so I thought, and i started wondering what to do--

"If only we're chatting in some public place, like on a train."

So I came to a very simple conclusion,

"Ah!"

I had a single thought.

It was best if I could prepare this first, so I took action to begin preparations.

Once I was done, I stood by the window of the living room, thinking that the hills on this day were pretty when the doorbell rang.

Through the screen on the speakerphone, I saw that it was Nitadori, and opened the door.

"Come in!"

So Nitadori walked in.

The security functions of this apartment building is truly satisfactory. Before taking the elevator, the rider has to repeat the same actions again.

If not, the elevator buttons could not be pressed. It's pretty troublesome for frequent visitors, I guess?

As a side note, the residents need to raise a card key towards a sensor before the corridor and elevator. There's a chip inside the card key, and the door will open, the elevator will shift over, and the residents can press the button leading to that particular level.

I timed the moment, thinking that it was about time, and waited before the unlocked door. I discovered signs of footsteps.

Then, I opened the door--

"Hii!"

I was taken aback by the shrieking Nitadori, my body twitching, "Ah...erm, sorry."

I apologized for a reason I could not understand, and welcomed Nitadori into my house.

"Erm, welcome."

"Pl-please pardon my intrusion..."

Nitadori said as she slowly entered, removed her shoes, and placed them facing outside.

After seeing her remove her socks, I realized something. Argh, I forgot to prepare slippers. I hurriedly went to the shoe cabinet to get them.

I guess nobody wore this pair of slippers before.

My rented 'house' is close to school, has large rooms, and is useful for taxation purposes. It's a 4LDK.

After entering, there's a corridor straight down. Two rooms the size of 6 tatamits are on the right, used as the library and the storeroom respectively.

There are cheap steel shelves in the library, and the books I bought are all stacked fully. The storeroom has a transparent case for me to put my suit, along with a dust absorber.

To the left are the restroom and bathroom.

Further down the corridor is a spacious area where the living room and dining room are almost one, facing a balcony with a wonderful view.

Also, there is a Japanese-styled room 6 tatamis wide. This room was supposed to be one with the living room, forming a spacious place, but there isn't a need for much space for a family of two, so it became mom's bedroom.

"Woah! It's rather new! So pretty!"

I continued this introduction tour of my house to Nitadori, who was happily looking around the room.

"Great retention of sunlight. Oh, nice view! It's so windy! So cooling!"

Nitadori appeared to be enjoying herself.

And then, I recalled last November, when I came to visit this apartment.

I had the exact same thoughts as Nitadori has right now, I was really excited. Even when mom bemoaned the price of the apartment, I decided to stay here. And then, my dream was fulfilled.

It happened a mere half a year ago, yet I felt it was a long time ago.

Next to the living room was a large Western-styled room facing the balcony, 8-tatami wide. That's my bedroom, and my workplace.

Nitadori looked around the living room, and said,

"Now finally, the workplace!"



I, acting as guide, then responded,

"Understood."

I approached the door. The window's opened, so there shouldn't be any sweaty smell, so i thought as I opened the door.

"Come in."

On the wooden floor of this 8 tatami room, there were various things including the thin, long bookshelf b the wall, a black steel bed ordered from a furniture wholesaler, and a similarly cheap bed.

"So this is your workplace, sensei! The place where 'Vice Versa is born!"

Incredulously, Nitadori spoke with such riveting words. There are times when I would type on the train, or in the hotel, sometimes on the sofa in the living room, but I'll say about 70% of the work is done here.

But despite so, having this first visitor made me happy.

"May I come in?"

Nitadori stood at the entrance, looking around. She doesn't need my approval, so I thought as I answered, "Of course."

Nitadori entered the room. I closed the door carefully, not letting the wind blow the door aside, and locked it as usual.

"Eh?"

Nitadori, standing two meters before me, looked at me with skepticism.

"Hm?"

I blurted out. Nitadori was at a loss of words,

"Ah, erm..."

And then,

"You locked the door..."

"Well, it's a usual habit."

"Even though you're in your house."

Ah, I see.

I didn't know the situation regarding other families . So there's a culture of families not locking their doors. No, I guess no ordinary family, including Nitadori's. Maybe they never had locks to begin with.

Since mom isn't at home, I reached out to unlock the door.

"Now then, for some introductions--"

Saying that, I moved forward, passing Nitadori as I stood before the desk, and pointed at the large laptop on it, "This is the computer, my number one apparatus. The 'Vice Versa' manuscript sent for competition was typed out here."

I introduced this 'weapon' that changed my life, and enabled me to battle.

"Ohh! This is it! --The delinquent bike!"

Great reaction from Nitadori. Once again, she went overboard with the example.

I opened it, took out a hard disk, and showed it to her.

"So all the data is contained in this disk...so if anyone is to steal it and run away..."

"I'll pursue him to the depths of Hell--well, I do set up backups when I'm free, so I can continue to work."

"Ahaha."

The nine released volumes of 'Vice Versa', the high school textbooks and reference books were all neatly stacked on the desk.

That is because I would read my past works.

"I see, so you are wearing two mats here?"

She seemed rather impressed as she said this. While it should be 'two hats' instead, I did not bother to correct her.

There were a few corkboard on the wall before the bookshelf.

I did not want to have too many holes on the wall, so I bought them through

mail, and hung a few of them within reach.

The corkboards would hold the illustrations of 'Vice Versa' the editorial branch would send to me as reference, along with the illustrations I printed for myself.

I bought a color printer when I moved to this house, and was so giddy with joy, I printed lots.

Nitadori stared at the illustrations of Shin, Sin and Meek, "This is nice. Really nice."

She was already looking as a fan, her head swaying as she looked on.

Amongst them, there were illustrations of unrevealed drafts and character designs, and when the wrong costumes were drawn.

"I never saw this before!--not this either! Who is this? Is this the enemy general 'Coat'? Is this the original design for 'Dasca'? Eh, who is this character?"

Nitadori seemed really happy.

"Please don't leak this out."

I raised this extremely late request, and explained them all one by one."

And by the time I realized, we spent 20 minutes before the desk.

After introducing basically everything I wanted to show her in the room, I said, "And there's one thing I want to show you no matter what."

I opened the drawer.

Within it, which I usually used to store pencils and erasers, that thing appeared.

It was something I prepared beforehand.

I opened the envelope placed within the transparent case used for storage, and revealed the letter placed there.

Handing that letter over to Nitadori, I said,

"I think you probably would want to see this thing you haven't seen in a while."

"Ah--"

After seeing that letter, Nitadori widened her eyes, but did not accept the letter.

"Where is the toilet?"

She suddenly shouted, so I hurriedly opened the door.

"To-to the right of the corridor! The switch to the lights is outside!"

I instructed, and Nitadori darted past me,

"You could have asked for the washroom instead!"

I thought of saying so, but did not.

For if I was mistaken, that she had a tummyache, it would have been embarrassing for me.

I slipped the fanmail from Stella Hamilton back into the drawer.

It was a treasure for eternity.

That until death, I would not want to lose.

This letter really delighted me, and I replied.

I never expected that after two years, the person who sent me this letter actually came to my room.

Life is really unpredictable.

Really interesting.

I don't know when I might die. It might even be today--

But I'm really glad to be born on this world.

As I stood on the balcony, watching the hills with the comfortable breeze blowing at me, "Sorry..."

After her 'long toilet break', Nitadori went to the living room, and I followed suit.

Then, she stood before me, the eyes beneath her glasses looking a little red.

"I'm very happy. Also, I remembered a lot of things. While they aren't good memories, those past memories made me who I am."

Stella, wearing a black wig, colored lens, and glasses without degree, showed a smile as she said this.

Seeing that face, she's pretty after all, so I had this random thought.

It'll be great if I can have such a beautiful girlfriend, so I thought.

And then, I quickly gave up on this notion.

Putting an actual person as the basis of a delusion will never end well.

In fact, the conversations I could imagine, and the impressions I gain from them, none of them existed.

It's one thing if they're fictitious characters. I should in fact be doing that and focus on writing.

But I can't use a living person as a basis for my delusions. There is a huge difference between the impressions in my delusions and the actual persons, and I would end up unable to converse.

I focused my attention on Stella. After introducing everything I wanted to show, I wondered what to show next, when Stella suddenly said, "I have something important to say."

I was quietly taken aback.

And even if I was not, I had issues dealing with the stiff formal language of hers when she's in Stella-mode, so I was really nervous.

What is this 'really important' thing?

Being so formal, I could tell she wasn't joking around, but I could not understand what she was trying to say.

"Have you realized? There's a terrifying presence in this room."

Would she say such a thing? Would she dig out a talisman from her bag and stick it onto the wall? Is she an exorcist?

No--that's not it.

It's probably when 'I deemed her as my girlfriend', right?

Speaking of which, I haven't apologized to her about this.

Or rather, more foolishly, I had forgotten about this.

During this time, my actions made it seem like that never happened.

She's probably fuming about this? Will she berate me over this?"

"Do you know how it feels to be called someone else's girlfriend without asking?"

Would she say such a thing?

To be honest, I'm really scared. I wanted to run away.

I wanted to go home.

And then, I realized I was at home.

"Wh-what is it...?"

I could not run away.

There was no one who would save me.

I hope someone can save me,

"I--"

With rage on her face, Stella spoke up. Suddenly, the door at the entrance opened.

"I'm back!"

I never expected my mother to be the one to save me!

## Chapter 5-2 - June 19, I went to his house

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

Strictly put, this isn't correct.

I should be saying this.

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently forced to strangle my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

Sensei has his hands reached out, holding down my hands that are pressed on both sides of his neck.

But he hasn't exerted enough strength to crush my hands--

At least, it doesn't seem like it'll stop sensei's blood flow.

But his neck and hands are pretty hot.

June 19th, Thursday.

On the day without the plum rain at work, I took the car Miss Akane drove to the station.

At the same time, I recalled the excessive events that transpired this week.

Justs the previous week, the After Record of 'Vice Versa' episode 11 ended without a hitch.

On this eleventh After Record, for the first time, sensei did not appear in the studio.

Meek and Madoko did not show up, so I spent the entire time watching the senior voice actors perform before me, save for the occasional part as a mob character.

Every time, I felt that everyone acted really well, and I hoped I could be just like them as soon as possible.

The anime visuals are really brilliant. The castles are similar to the real thing. It's no wonder they had to obtain material. At the scene before the station, there was the convenience store where I always bought the potato chips.

Sensei probably wanted to see it too. So I thought, and realized that there was something I could tell him through mail, so I did.

So work ended. I heaved a sigh of relief, and went to the lobby.

"Hello Nitadori. You look really skinny now. Have you eaten well?"

Suddenly, I heard someone speak to me with Shin's voice. This manner of greeting is too overboard.

I could only hear that voice actor up close and personal.

"Not at all."

I answered. Ever since that incident, I never got to finish a proper meal.

"Have you slept well?"

"No."

I had difficulty sleeping every day. Sometimes, I would ingest sleeping pills.

"Hmm...did something happen between you and the person who isn't around?"

He spoke with an overly intimate tone.

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

I answered as I glared at him.



As a rookie, it was terrible of me to be treating my seniors like this. But at this point, I did not care.

Suddenly, the voice actor smile. It was a natural smile I had never shown before.

“Well, this is the real you, Nitadori. Not bad, a lot better now. It’s better to interact with others with this attitude, no matter who you’re dealing with. There’s no need to maintain a distance for no reason.”

He was not speaking with ‘Shin’s voice, but with his actual voice.

“...”

“Eh? I said that for fun. Am I right?”

The voice actor shrugged, and I answered him,

“Wrong, thank you.”

In the following conversation, we never held back. I earnestly prayed that nobody else heard these words.

“Hm? If it’s wrong, why are you thanking me?”

“Because you got me a little more energetic.”

“Oh, how cute--so Nitadori, a little request?”

“What is it?”

“Marry me.”

“I refuse.”

“An immediate answer? --That’s too fast of you!”

“Do you think the answer will be a little better fifty years later? It’ll be the same.”

“How hurtful. Be a little nicer to your boyfriend.”

“Hm, if I have one--thank you very much for your lesson and demonstration.”

“No problems. But if you have something to say to your boyfriend, I think you should be honest.”

“I have done so.”

“What? And you two are on good terms...beyond the level of boyfriend and girlfriend. Lovers even. I envy him.”

“Is that so?”

“That’s right. He does know your true identity, right, Nitadori?”

“...”

“I haven’t lived these years for nothing. You can ask me about anything you don’t understand. Go ahead.”

“Don’t mind if I do. I have a question.”

“Sure. Do we go to the restaurant outside?”

“No, here will do. So I shall ask. Do you think it is possible for ‘someone to nearly be killed, yet be forgiven’?”

“Wha--those are some surprising words. Why did he nearly get killed? Is that person the reason?”

“Not at all. Seriously.”

“...”

“What do you think?”

“Well...is he immortal like Shin?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“So you mean he dies when he’s killed?”

“Yes.”

“Even so, to have others kill him without any resistance...I can only think of one possible reason.”

“What is it?”

“Hm, to answer here, or not? I guess we should go to the restaurant and enjoy some delicious tea together--”

**“Just say it!”**

“Woah, that’s scary...was that English? What does it mean?”

“It means ‘please tell me’.”

“I get the feeling that it doesn’t mean that, no, it definitely doesn’t mean that in Japanese...well, whatever. If I have to guess, there’s an unlikely chance, but I can only think of a reason. That is--”

“That is?”

“That ‘he was nearly killed a few times in the past, and has become numb to this’.”

“He was...nearly killed...a few times...?”

“In other words, ‘me’.”

“Huh?”

“You see, not ‘I’ in particular, but ‘me’. Shin. In Reputation.”

“Ah...”

“Just a little earlier, the voice director said this to me. ‘Regarding your screams when you die, be a little crisp. Makoto no longer fears death, so please act in a way that won’t make it seem like Shin’s really scared.’”

“Ah--ahh.”

“So ever since, when acting as Shin on Reputation, I would think ‘death isn’t scary’.”

“...”

“Is this useful as reference?”

“...Y-yes...”

“But then, you just said ‘he isn’t immortal, Nitadori.’”

“Yes, but I never tried to see if it’s true...”

“You can’t go about testing that. What happens if he isn’t?”

“...”

“Well, so I say, what I said might not be correct. This is the only reason I can

think of.”

“Thank you.”

“No problems. Shall we have a meal together?”

“No thanks, I will not be going. I have something to do immediately.”

“How cruel. Well, let’s forget about today--if there’s any trouble you face, please think of my face, Nitadori.”

While taking the taxi with Miss Akane, I kept staring at the smartphone.

“You’ll get dizzy, you know?”

I ignored her words as I pondered my choice of words.

‘Hey sensei. Did you have any near death experience before the time I choked you?’

There was no way I could send such a message.

“Sigh...”

“Your happiness will slip away, you know?”

Upon hearing her words, I sent a completely meaningless message.

I got an immediate reply, which was vanilla as well.

“Sigh...”

“Your happiness will slip away, you know?”

I don’t think there’s any happiness left that hasn’t escaped, right?

I nearly killed someone I respected, and got forgiven by him for some strange reason. I wanted to know the reason, but I couldn’t ask, and kept running away. Once I finally had the will to ask, he took sick leave.

I thought, if so, I would visit him at his house.

His house...

“Ah! Ahh!”

“What? You dropped something?”

“No, more like I forgot something.”

“What is it?”

“A little promise. But...it’s fine.”

So I said as I tried to wave it off.

“Sensei allowed me to visit his house! I can just go to his house. I can ask him through mail now!”

I couldn’t say this to Miss Akane.”

For surely she would tell me,

“Very well. I shall go along too.”

I will send him a message tonight.

So I quietly made up my mind.

It was until two days later, on Sunday, that I finally sent that message.

18th, Wednesday.

After school, I waited twenty minutes before leaving school.

Through messages, I affirmed that I could pay a visit. Though I knew his unit number, and had his mail address stored in my phone, I had the information written on a note, in case the phone did malfunction.

After four minutes of walking, i would be able to reach the apartment sensei was staying at.

Those four minutes seemed really long.

If only it was raining. I could have covered my face with an umbrella. However, the weather that day was so fine, I could not believe it was the plum rain season.

During the first two minutes, I was concerned with the other students who were headed in the same direction as me.

"Eh! Isn't this Nitadori? Why are you walking here? That's rare. Where are you going?"

I was scared at the prospect of others talking to me.

"Where are you going? Where are you going? Why aren't you talking? Can't talk? Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello? Hello hello hello hello hello hello hello--"

Just imagining it caused a chill to run up my spine.

I could feel my face and body sweating.

It was so unbearable, I had the urge to remove my wig and glasses.

But even so, after three minutes, I could not see the other students. I was alone, walking on the streets.

Following this, I would be headed to the place with no escape room, to be with him, alone.

I was mentally prepared. Or rather, I was headed there for this reason.

In the message, I learned that sensei's mother would be out for work.

I entered the entrance to the apartment block sensei was staying at, and pressed the room number to call for him. I no longer had the urge to run away at that point.

"In a battle, the scariest part is the night before the battle. That's the fear of whether you can see the next night again. But once you step onto the battlefield, that fear disappears."

At this point, I could understand the words Sin said.

*"Come in!"*

Once I did hear sensei's voice, the thick glass doors opened.

I repeated the same process before the elevator, and entered.

At the second to last apartment on the corridor, I made up my mind, "I'm not going to run away before sensei, no matter what."

I arrived at the door, and decided to calm myself down during the ten seconds before I pressed the bell.

At that moment, I was not muttering 'time to play'.

So, what was the mantra? I could not think of any, so I never muttered. All I did was to have ten seconds to calm myself down.

Once I was sure I was at the right door, I stood at it, and took a deep breath.

The door opened.

"Hii!"

I shrieked.

I, not daring to raise a question immediately, could only continue with the act.

"Great retention of sunlight. Oh, nice view! It's so windy! So cooling!"

To be honest, the room didn't matter.

"Well, enough with that. Sit here, I have something to say."

To be honest, I didn't have the courage to say that to sensei, who was happily introducing the rooms to me.

So I decided to wait until he was done introducing the rooms to me, and I could at least cool down, before asking, "Now finally, the workplace!"

So I prompted sensei. Truth be told, I was more interested in the place where 'Vice Versa' was born, as compared to the other rooms.

Sensei opened the door to his room, and led me in,

"So this is your workplace, sensei! The place where 'Vice Versa is born! --May I come in?"

So I said, and then I entered.

Thus,

I heard sensei lock the door behind me.

It might be hard to believe in Japan--

But in a foreign country, the school will teach female students this, *"For example, if you are called to the office by a male teacher (to a single room), and*

*enter. If that teacher locks the door, do scream immediately."*

Goes without saying, the reason is obvious,

In other words, one can't trust the other gender, even if it's an acquaintance.

"Eh?"

I instinctively called out,

"Ah, erm...I locked the door...well, it's a habit."

And sensei, stunned by this, uttered an unreasonable line, Of course, most foreigners would lock their doors.

Same goes for my family. There are locks installed on the doors of the children's rooms, and my parents would ask me to keep my key safe. When there's no need to lock, the door will remain open, even when people are inside.

But in Japan, it's said that many parents don't allow their children to install locks in their rooms. I didn't know which one's the right thing.

"...even though I'm at home"

Saying that, sensei again reached for the lock.

He probably didn't understand why I was so shocked.

Then, sensei started introducing various things in the room.

Like his work computer, the printed illustrations that were laid out, and so on.

They were interesting. To be honest, I was excited about these undisclosed illustrations and designs. As a fan of 'Vice Versa', he really showed me some amazing things.

"It's really interesting! See you tomorrow then!"

I was utterly delighted. It would be wonderful if I could say these words and go home.

After this happy time--

"And there's one thing I want to show you no matter what."



Sensei suddenly said.

He then opened a drawer, taking out that thing.

It happened too quickly, and I was unable to imagine what he wanted to show me.

"I think you probably would want to see this thing you haven't seen in a while."

Once I saw the thing he showed me--

I really felt that the determination of humanity was all pointless.

After crying a long while, I regained my courage.

I washed the tears off my face at the basin, and returned to the living.

For I had something to say to the one standing at the balcony, basked in the sun.

"I'm very happy. Also, I remembered a lot of things. While they aren't good memories, those past memories made me who I am."

As I stood in the middle of the living, I blurted out whatever I wanted to say.

Sensei's staring right at me, and I did not know what he was thinking.

Though I did not know, I had to say,

"I have something important to say."

I said it. The die is cast. Once this is over, there is nothing to be afraid, "Wh-what is it...?"

"First, I have to apologize to you, sensei. For peeking at the manuscript on my own discretion, and for trying to strangle you. And then, why did you forgive me? Please tell me the reason. I am not going to leave until you say so."

So I wanted to say,

"I--"

But the moment I was about to speak up, the door opened, and a cheery voice rang, "I'm back!"

"Eh?" "Eh?"

My voice was in sync with sensei's.

Our necks moved in the same manner.

Sensei and I looked at the corridor in unison, and at the bright rectangular space before us, there appeared a lady.

Of course, at that instant, I knew who she was.

She was the other occupant of this house, sensei's mother. This mother managed to provide some gifted education simply by moving houses.

She was supposed to be working, but for some reason, she had returned home.

What surprised me more than the fact that sensei's mother had returned home, was her beauty.

Once she saw me, she squealed,

"Eh!"

This pretty lady hurriedly removed her court shoes, stumbled on the corridor, and approached me.

She was shorter than me, about 160cm or so, dressed in a plain white blouse and navy blue skirt. She had a nice slender body.

Her black hair was tied up,, and she had a pair of large, bright eyes; some tear bags too.

What a beauty.

While everyone's preferences differ, I don't think anyone on this world will say that she's 'not a beauty'. If I have to use a cliché, she's so pretty that I can buy a claim that she's 'a Japanese movie actress'.

*Age-wise, as she's sensei's mother, she's probably 35 at minimum, but she doesn't look that old. Miss Akane looks younger than she really is, and she too might be the same.*

Aunty's storming over.

"Wait! Wait! Wait"

She spoke with a loud voice as she entered the living, stopped before us, and called out the name of her one son (of course, the real name) "Wh-what's going on? What' happened? Who is this? Did you abduct her?"

She spoke with same surprise, some delight, and some bewilderment as she looked back and forth between sensei and me.

"Erm...mom."

For the first time, I learned this was how sensei called his mother.

"Calm down, let me explain."

Sensei was strangle calm for some reason.

I didn't know why he was so calm. I didn't think he would have expected his mother to return home. Maybe it's because he's at home?

"Okay! And so?"

With a curious look, aunty widened her eyes.

I was looking forward to how sensei would introduce me--and bracing myself.

Looking at the current situation, it's rather troublesome. But sensei can't just not introduce me.

First, sensei introduced me by name, as to be expected,

"This is my classmate, Miss Eri Nitadori."

And then, he slyly explained,

"Currently, she's the only one at school who knows that I'm an author. She's sitting right behind me in the classroom, and I let slip my secret. She's a fan of 'Vice Versa'."

It seemed sensei would always maintain the two secrets, the 'I'm a voice actress participating in the anime production', and that 'we'll go to Tokyo together every week.

"So after school, we would chat a a bit--and when I mentioned that our house is close to school, she said she wanted to see the unreleased illustrations. In the

end, I couldn't refuse her completely, so I invited her here today."

Brilliant explanation. Nothing to nitpick.

Then it's my turn,

"Erm, hello! I'm Eri Nitadori!"

With the vibe of someone approaching a microphone, I bowed to aunty as I said this. I made sure not to bow too deeply. Given my usual habit, I would give the most formal greetings.

"I was really surprised to learn that sensei's an author in high school. I really love 'Vice Versa', and read the entire series. Sensei told me lots of things, and it made me happy. Of course, I haven't told this to anyone else!"

These were facts, so it was easy for me to say them all out.

"I see!"

Aunty spoke with relief and surprise. And then, she looked at me.

"Eri, is it? Can I call you Eri-chan then?"

"Huh?"

Due to shock, I squealed.

"Ah, that was so cute. How about it, Eri-chan?"

Aunty's bringing her pure face close to me.

Even when looking up close, she's pretty.

As someone of the same gender, I can be impartial enough to say that she's a beauty.

She's kind and earnest. In other words, she's someone genial.

I heard that she's a nurse. If such a person's giving gentle, delicate care to a patient, that should be great encourage to the patients.



"E-erm...s-sure, it's fine."

I stammered. Nobody had ever called me 'Eri-chan' since elementary school.

Back then, I was in a foreign country, attending 'remedials', and only partaking in Japanese lessons on Saturdays when I did not have to go to the local school.

It's embarrassing, but I didn't hate it.

"Okay! Thank you! It's not good to stand and talk. Have a seat! Relax!"

"Yes." Before I could say so, sensei simply replied,

"She's going back now. There isn't much time left."

Sensei interrupted.

That's a lie. But I agree with the action.

The moment sensei's mother returned home--

I had no choice but to give up.

I finally had the chance to speak up, but I got interrupted.

Even though I was sad and depressed, I couldn't pin the blame on aunty. She's returning home after all.

And even though she welcomed me, I couldn't stay for long.

There was only one choice I could choose.

"Yes, I have to return home soon."

I had to lament my misfortune, and head home.

For even if I did leave the bathroom a minute earlier, aunty would have returned home right when sensei's about to say what was on his mind.

If that happened, what would happen next...?

On this day, I saw the letter I once sent.

That alone was worth the trip.

So I thought as I decided to leave.

"I see. Such a pity!"

Aunty said, and then grabbed my hands from both sides.

"Woah!"

I exclaimed in shock. She then raised my hands right to my chest, "Eri-chan, my weird son here shall be in your care then! I don't understand at all, but it does seem he 'only' has the talent to write!"

"Y-yes...I can't really talk to him in school, lest the secret is revealed..."

I answered as I thought of something else.

"This person's hands are really warm" so I thought.

In fact, my hands were overly cold.

But even so, this person's hands were really warm, so comforting."

"If my son is to say something weird or do anything infuriating, feel free to vent your rage on him!"

"Ok-okay..."

I already did that. I once strangled him in my rage.

Right, aunty.

I once tried to kill your one and only son.

If in the future, I have a child, and raised him up.

And then, he was killed at the age of seventeen, the reason being 'he tried to kill off a beloved character in his work'--

What would I think?

I knew the answer.

"I will kill him."

I probably would have such a thought.

It's time to go back.

"Erm, well, goodbye. Glad to meet you."

I lied, and slowly withdrew my hands.

"Hm, such a pity."

Aunty finally was willing to let go of my hands.

And then, she ordered sensei,

"Send her off!"

Sensei remained calm however, and asked his mother why she returned earlier than expected.

"Ah, am I disturbing you?"

"No, not at all."

"Well, there's a colleague who wants to swap shifts with me, so I'm working night shift tonight. I'm going to sleep a bit and then go out."

Aunty said. So she means she's going to work on night shift instead of day shift? How long are the working hours?

"I see."

Sensei didn't seem surprised. So this is a common occurrence after all?

I wasn't familiar with the working habits of a nurse at all, so I couldn't comment.

"Eri-chan! Come back again!"

In the end, I bowed to aunty, who sent me off at the door.

Sensei and I were walking side by side on the corridor, and we entered the elevator that arrived immediately.

"Thank you for today--really."

"No worries--well, sorry that my mother was being all excited."

"No. She's really a cheerful, beautiful, outstanding person! She's a nurse, right? She's probably popular with the patients."



I said that with sincerity.

"She's pretty sloppy at home, actually. Also, she's normally not that excitable."

Sensei showed a rare smile.

I was wondering that this person would actually be so bashful when praised, and was relieved. It was true that aunty was a little overly excited.

We took the elevator down, and arrived at the empty atrium. The automatic doors opened.

"Too bad we were cut off before you could say anything--if possible, let's talk tomorrow."

Right.

"Yes, tomorrow."

I still had the next day. Also, sensei hinted at me.

I had decided. Once I returned home, I would take out that precious thing. The next day, I would keep it in my clutches.

"Here should be fine, right? I don't have my keys. Can't go back once I get out."

Sensei, standing on the inner side of the doors, was a little sheepish, "Of course. Thank you for today. See you on the train tomorrow!"

I smiled.

On the 19th, I was on the car headed from home to the station, and I told Miss Akane of what happened the previous day.

"Oh my, that happened."

I thought she would be fuming at me for heading to sensei's house without her consent, but she was not.

She probably assumed that since it happened, it was pointless to be angry, right?"

"Milady, don't you think you've done well? Another step forward."

And then, she praised me, something i did not expect.

I guess Miss Akane really trusts sensei? Or maybe she felt that he's not much of a threat?

Leaving that aside,

"I can consider myself unlucky for being unable to say that...but today should be fine!"

"Oh? Where did this confidence come from?"

"Because I have something that brings me courage. Today's me is very strong."

"Did you steal the chopper from the kitchen?"

"This isn't funny, Miss Akane."

"My apologies--however, I have some interest in that. If things do go well, do you mind showing me that thing?"

"Hm, what should I do?"

Of course, I answered that, following intending to do so once everything went well.

"Looking forward to it."

Miss Akane probably understood this too, as she happily continued.

There was still some time until the station,

"Speaking of which, now that you mentioned it, I do remember something. Sensei's name is--"

Miss Akane suddenly started talking about sensei's real name.

That's true. So what?

I affirmed, and Miss Akane said,

"I see...actually, I heard some rumors, regarding sensei's mother."

"Eh! From where? When did you hear it?"

It was really unexpected, and I was surprised.

"I had an acquaintance who stayed in the general hospital for quite a while, and this was what I was told. Well, that name's really common, so I couldn't be sure..."

"What rumors?"

"It's said that she's the most famous nurse in that hospital. First off, she looks far younger than her given age, a Japanese beauty who resembled an actress, and she's very popular with the men. Work-wise, she's capable and hardworking--"

There's a likely possibility.

"Also, it's said that her hands are warm. Anyone who's not feeling well; will really feel comfy and warm when held on the hands or patted on the back. So said him along with the other other patients. A lot of people use the cliché 'white angels' to describe them, and she is one such person."

Ah, that's right.

"It's her! Miss Akane! No doubt about it!"

I exclaimed.

And I started to think,

Was sensei so 'gentle' to a startling extent because of aunty's influence?

As he's raised by an 'angel', he's able to forgive even when he's nearly killed?

It's just a one-sided imagination on my part. If I want to know the truth, I'll still have to ask him.

I recalled the warm hands of sensei's mother, and said,

"Her hands felt so warm when they touched me..."

"Your hands are always so chilly, Milady, so her hands will obviously be much warmer, no? Did you scald yourself?"

"That's cruel of you, Miss Akane..."

"Do people not say that 'those with cold hands have warm hearts'--?"

She hardly discussed such things, so I was surprised,

"Are you comforting me?"

"No, I am not done. What I am saying is that 'that is a load of nonsense, that the inner body temperature fluctuates according to the time, location, and target.'"

"..."

Miss Akane's the same as usual, absolutely brutal.

"When dealing with others, a person can become an angel, or a devil. In other words, whoever one becomes will be determined on who they are."

*"I will kill anyone, all to save meek!"*

My mind was suddenly filled with the imagery of that day.

"...I have a question, Miss Akane."

"What is it? We're reaching the station, so keep it short."

"Do you think someone who was once a devil can become an angel?"

Miss Akane immediately answered me,

"Certainly, and the reverse holds true too."

## Chapter 5-3 - June 19, I forgot

The train departed.

And so, I was saved by mom's unexpected return home--

Thinking about it, I had a feeling that she would say 'something Stella wanted to say the previous day but couldn't do so'. When we went our separate ways, I told her to do so.

In any case, she would be asking a day later, and nothing's solved.

But if it's the usual, Miss Kamishiro will be seated next to me, and the train's a public location--

She's probably not going to tell me off that harshly.

I hope not.

Probably not.

In any case, my thoughts won't be swayed.

"No matter the topic, if she's angry, I'll apologize."

So I thought, and my smartphone vibrated.

I was really taken aback.

I knew from the vibration that it was a mail notification. From Nitadori?

*"I don't want to see you today!"*

Will she say such a thing?

*"Want to know the reason? Hm, okay, listen--"*

Will my face be as pale as the clear skies of midwinter?

With trembling hands, I took out the vibrating smartphone.

"What..."

I heaved a sigh of relief, for it was from the editor.

I did not receive that call, as I did not want to leave my seat before Nitadori arrived.

The phone started to record a voicemail. I decided to listen, and then message back at the deck.

The message was recorded, and I listened. What would be it about?

I listened.

And then--

My face was as pale as the clear skies of midwinter.

## Chapter 5-4 - June 19, I remembered

On the departed train, I went to the usual carriage.

The aisle was narrow, and the train was shaking, so it was really difficult for me to walk.

But so what?

If the paths have been paved for me, I won't be able to reach the place I want to reach.

Today, I'm going to pursue the matter,

"Your bastard! Why did you forgive me! You were nearly killed by me!-- Answer me!"

I didn't care whether I was on the train.

No way would I miss out this chance again.

Once I was done walking down the large carriage, I reach the deck where the toilet and washroom were.

It was here where I once committed a sin.

That thereafter, the person I wanted to kill saved me.

So to know the reason, I entered the carriage sensei was waiting in.

"Ah! You're here! I'm talking on the phone! My ticket's on the seat! If the conductor drops by, please take over!"

And then, with a smartphone in hand, he passed me by, ducked into the deck, and vanished before my eyes.

"Huh?"

Since it was something I could do nothing about, I leaned my back on the seat, and waited.

The empty window side seat to my left had a bag and the ticket on it, so I took care of them for him. Of course, I would never peek into his bag on my own volition again.

Soon after, a middle-aged male conductor came to check the tickets, and I showed two.

Sensei did not return in a while, but he could not have hopped out from the moving train, so I could deal with waiting for minutes, dozens even. There's two and a hour hours until the destination.

I guess the call was from the editor. No way was I ridiculous enough to disturb others at work all because I had something important to discuss.

There's no need for me to panic. No matter how long it takes, I'll wait. So I waited patiently, pondering over the choice of words, and waiting for that moment.

So another five, ten minutes passed.

Sensei returned to my side while I was leisurely waiting.

I stood up to let him pass through. Once I saw his face, I was rather surprised, saying, "Wh-what is it...?"

Sensei's face was as pale as a corpse.

What's with him?

Not feeling well again? But his face was really pale.

"Thank, you."

Sensei stumbled forward, and took his bag, sitting down.

"I forgot...I forgot!"

He said, and took out his computer from his bag.

He tossed his backpack aside, and placed it on his thighs, opened it, switched it on, and the monitor flickered.



"What is it?"

I tidied my hair, and sat down again. I asked the same question, and sensei's neck turned to the right like a rusted machine.

Looking really pale, sensei said,

"I forgot a join...the really short story of 'Vice Versa' that was to be submitted by yesterday...it was supposed to be published on the digital 'Dengeki Bunko Magazine'..."

"Eh?"

"Actually, the deadline was supposed to be Tuesday...the editor-in-charge delayed the deadline, but I forgot about it..."

"Eh!"

"I haven't written a line...if I don't go all out to focus on writing, it'll be a mess...it'll be really, really bad..."

"Th-then--"

"Sorry Nitadori! I got to work! I'm going to focus on writing before we reach Tokyo."

I could have seen his password, but he entered it anyway, and stared at the watch.

And then, once he booted the word software, he stared at the screen as he kept typing.

What's with this situation?

What does he mean?

Is he asking me to 'disturb sensei and keep asking! Don't care about the deadline!' or something?

No, of course not.

I am not so insensitive.

Thus--

On the ride that lasted more than two and a half hours, sensei spent two hours and twenty minutes typing at the keyboard.

And I remained seated by the side.

Sometimes, I would glance to the side, and see the words on the screen accelerate at an astounding rate, but I never read it.

This time, I bought some consomme flavored chips, but I could not hand them to him in this situation.

I had checked the script an umpteenth time.

From time to time, I would check on sensei's sidelong face, and he looked grim and desperate.

I guess it's a rare experience to be able to personally witness a professional author at work.

If not for this being the day it happened--

"Ooh, so this is how 'Vice Versa' is written!"

As a fan, I might be able to enjoy this.

Fifteen minutes before the train arrived at the terminal, "F-finally done...sent a message for the editor to check. We'll have a meeting immediately after the After Record, should be fine..."

Sensei finally spoke up after two hours of silence.

This is great, really great.

But do I have to give up this week and wait another week?

You got to be kidding.

I decided to ask on this day. I brought along my weapon primed for this purpose.

So i thought, what should I do, what should I do.

And then, I thought of something.

I got up, pulled along Miss Akane seated next to me, passed through the automatic door and towards the deck.

"Is there something...? Milady?"

Miss Akane showed a rare surprised look, "Let's called aunty!"

And so I whispered sharply.

# Chapter 6-1 - June 19, I was strangled by her

## II

I'm a high school boy and a bestselling light novel author, strangled by my classmate who is my underclassman and a voice actress.

This is my current predicament.

June 19th, that Thursday night.

I was in that hotel in Tokyo, the place I visited for the umpteenth time.

This space wasn't so big, but didn't need to be so. I was on the single bed, leaning my back on the wall, pillow and bolster.

I had my computer placed on my thighs that were extended forward. As it would heat up, the gentle heat would reach me through the jeans, like a kitten. I never had one, so it's just my imagination.

In this image, I was working on the manuscript of 'Vice Versa'.

A small television was placed on the edge of the table, the corner of the room. It's showing the NHK news at 9pm. They had been discussing the FIFA World Cup all this while.

Stored in a plastic bag next to me was a packet of consomme potato chips, 4 PET bottles of water and tea, and a sweet bun for supper.

Of course, the potato chips and two bottles of tea were from Nitadori. I intended to consume them on the return trip.

Everything else was bought by me when I visited a convenience store close to the hotel after I checked in. The bag containing the potato chips was bigger, so I stuffed the rest of the items inside.

This was the hotel I enjoyed staying in, and it was close to the Dengeki editorial branch near Iidabashi station.

Over the two years and so, whenever I visited Tokyo, I would be staying here, (except when at the end of year party). I took medical leave the previous week, but I had been staying here for ten consecutive Thursdays, so I did remember the appearances of the receptionists.

Surely they would have remembered whenever I checked in.

"Hey you! What happened to you last week yo!"

It wouldn't be weird for them to say that to me. But they didn't.

Also, I can imagine the ones on the other side of the counter discussing 'the high school boy from the countryside living here every Thursday, sponsored by a publisher'.

Will I be dubbed 'Thursday-kun' or 'Thursday Boy'? Anyway, I don't want to be called that on the streets.

On this day, while on the trip to Tokyo, I forgot something really serious.

The senior authors dubbed the period right before deadline or way after that as the 'carnage period'.

"In a little carnage period."

"Next week's gonna be a carnage. Don't ask me out."

"Got out of the carnage period! Let's go Karaoke!"

They would use this term. That's what I learned at the end-of-year.

And during the two and a half hours from dusk to night--

That was a period of carnage to me.

I was really anxious. This was the one thing I was most apprehensive of with regards to writing.

How did I forget to write that short story?

I had a note on the desk, a 'tasklist', and I pasted it there. My smartphone

calendar had this task recorded to.

And I forgot them all. I really forgot everything from my mind.

In this moment of crisis, the editor called me on the train. I really got saved.

If he had not contacted me--

For example, if he had contacted me only now, I would have faced a worse moment of carnage.

The content I had to write was decided, and the structure was completed (in my head), so I was able to complete it on the train, as I was able to focus.

I might be boasting, but i did feel this was a really interesting short story.

It's a comedy.

While Shin and Sin were in Reputation, they carelessly fell off a cliff. Shin died and revived, and in three days, was reunited with Sin. Before they met, Shin was treated as a god by the indigenous tribe living at the bottom of the valley.

I finished the final touches eight minutes before the train reached the terminal, and made it presentable to the editor. I sent the mail with the attached files through the smartphone internet as I sat on the train.

It's not a price to begin with, but I never got the chance to take to Nitadori at all.

And I never had the time to eat the potato chips on the train.

Nitadori and Miss Kamishiro got off the train first.

So for two consecutive days, Wednesday and Thursday, I never heard Nitadori, or Stella talk about that 'important thing'.

In other words, I did not have to hear her out.

This allowed me some relief, but there's still the following week. While we wouldn't talk in school, we would still meet. In fact, I couldn't escape at all, and I'm just pushing the problems behind me.

But even so, at least--

I wouldn't have to be so worried.

So I started to relax. After a while, I changed into the pajamas prepared in the room, and intended to sleep by twelve latest, to prepare for the After Record.

Right before bed, I started to relax, with the TV airing as the background music, and enjoy the moment of writing a novel While I was feeling completely satisfied, I heard a knock on the door.

At first, I had assumed the knocking was from the neighboring door, or opposite.

There was no way anyone would visit my room at this time. It never happened before.

But after hearing the door knock again, I had to recognize that it was a knock on my door.

What's going on?

With laptop in hand, I got up from the bed. I shut it, and placed it on the table by the window.

And then, I switched off the TV using the remote control.

My shoes were placed at the door of the room, so I inserted my feet into the room slippers.

And then, I teetered towards the door, where someone was calling for me.

After the third knock, I approached the door, and was about to take a step forward.

"Coming."

I responded.

As there was a peephole in the door, a door scope, I decided to check.

It would be bad if it's a killer awaiting me.

No, in the movies I watched, once the house owner peep through, there'll be a gun pointed, and fired. I will die if my right eye's shot through.

But that's very unlikely. So I bent down, guessing that it was the hotel staff, and looked through.

And then, I spotted the one nocking.

Black hair, light green glasses.

Nitadori.

Why Nitadori?

Isn't she living at a relative's?

How did she know about this hotel and room number?

I had a lot of questions on my mind, and pulled the horizontal sliding lock.

I opened the door, and affirmed that my eyes weren't playing tricks on me. It was Nitadori.

Was I right to imagine her as a 'killer'?

"Good night sensei. Sorry for the sudden visit."

Nitadori said with a frozen look, and nodded hastily. Her long hair flowed. It's definitely her voice.

Her attire was different from when we were on the train. Home clothes, maybe? She was dressed in pants with large pockets at the thighs, along with a three-quarter sleeved shirt, looking really relaxed.

I then knew it was Nitadori, but I did not understand why she visited.

"W-Why?"

I was quietly taken aback, but I asked slowly.

"I could smell some very nice horse sashimi smell from this room, so I came running here from my relative's place. Let me have some!"

Would she say such a thing? So I wondered.

"I have something to discuss. I couldn't talk on the train."

She did not mention that horse sashimi.

Till this point, I understood everything.



But how did she know where I was?

"And you know this hotel and the room..."

"You mentioned the hotel name before."

"Ah..."

Speaking of which, I did. That was probably when I first talked with Nitadori on the train.

"But...the room number?"

I was really surprised, and asked,

Surely no hotel staff would inform others of my room number.

Even if the person asking's my acquaintance, the hotel staff will merely call my room if needed. She can't possibly enter the suite level either.

"Erm...I'll tell you that later. Mind letting me in?"

Nitadori asked as she answered,

"Erm, alone?"

And in response,

"Impossible."

Answering me was Miss Kamshiro, standing to the right of the door, poking her head in from a place I could not see. She stood by the side like a shinobi.

She was holding a device a little bigger than the phone. Nitadori said, "I shall answer your question then, sensei. This is a sensor. This room is giving off a strong consomme scent, so we know where you live."

Th-that's impossible...but, I guess it might be possible with Miss Kamshiro's secret weapon...?

While I was feeling dumbfounded,

"That was a joke. In fact, I placed a microchip into the potato chips bag. If it's within distance, I can determine the location. The battery's running out, so rest assure."

Miss Kamishiro answered. She's as scary in various ways as usual.

"Milady decided to stay in a double room with me here. I told her aunt that she would be with her colleagues till late, and that we decided to stay at a hotel near the studio."

"I see."

So at this point, i finally got something clear about Nitadori. This 'staying at the relative's place' part was real?

"Can I--come in?"

Nitadori asked again. I was thinking it was impossible for me to refuse her.

Thus, on this day, I had to face Nitadori (or Stella). I steeled myself.

Since Nitadori was so desperate to question me, I assume she must be feeling furious. I didn't know We couldn't just discuss on the corridor. While the room's small, I could only invite them in.

With Miss Kamishiro around, there shouldn't be any problems.

"Of course, come in."

I said, and held the door with the left hand, backing up.

Nitadori passed me by, but did not enter the room.

She merely took a step forward, stopped right at the door, and reached her right hand out for the handle.

At that moment, I was taken aback, and then I understood that she did not want to enter the room without me entering first. Thus, I moved my left hand away.

I then entered the room, as she hoped, and turned back to see Nitadori follow suit.

After that, Miss Kamishiro was about to enter through the door--

"Eh!"

But Nitadori suddenly shouted, and barged into Miss Kamishiro on the shoulder.

"Huh?"

I looked over at her, giving an awkward cry.

Miss Kamishiro, who was suddenly attacked, severely lost her balance. However, she did not trip over. She stumbled a few steps back, and was barely able to maintain her balance.

This action alone was enough to force her out of the room.

And Nitadori reached her hand out, closing the door slowly.

Miss Kamishiro's face was blocked by the door, and the door got a crisp sound as it shut, and locked itself.

"..."

I might have been taken. Nitadori turned her head around, and smiled at me, "Sorrry to startle you."

Right behind her, I could hear the forceful twist of the door knob. Of course, it wouldn't budge.



I thought Miss Kamishiro would be screaming, but she never did.

Of course, she probably knew she would be disturbing others, and immediately stopped doing so.

"Is this fine?"

I asked.

"This is fine."

Nitadori answered with a different intonation.

I had a thought.

Nitadori might have something very important to tell me.

That she would not say in front of Miss Kamishiro, if possible.

I understood everything till this point.

As for what she wanted to say however, I did not know.

"Understood...I'll hear you out. It's inconvenient to talk standing up. If you don't mind, have a seat."

It might be the first time in my life that I used the expression 'it's inconvenient to talk standing up'. So this is also applicable in real life. I'm a little moved.

"Thank you. Yes, it seems so."

Nitadori answered, and this time, she moved forward, passed me, and into the room.

Huh?

All I had to do was to reach out, exert some force on the door, and it'll open.

I brooded, and wanted to say that since it's Miss Kamishiro outside, things should be fine. I did not open the door, and gave chase after Nitadori instead.

I felt that if I opened the door, I would have wasted all of Nitadori's efforts and determination. I was scared of what she would say to me, but I did not open the door. Nitadori went deep inside the room, quickly turned the chair at the window side desk around, and sat down.

This time, she did not follow the usual routine of tying her wig, and draping it forward.

Instead, she sat down, placed her hands on her chest, and in a fluid motion, ripped off her wig.

Once she took off the black wig, the real hair beneath the net--the faint brown hair, almost grey appeared before me.

She quickly rolled up the wig in her hands, and placed it next to the phone on the table. Then, she immediately took the net off with one hand, and let her delicate and short hair flutter gently.

She then removed her glasses, and gently laid it beside the wig on the table, She then widened her right eye with her left fingers, and reached her right fingers into the eye.

It might look scary, but I knew what she was doing. She was removing the colored contacts beneath her glasses.

Once she took it off, she casually dumped it into her pocket.

I suppose it was a customized colored contact lens.

I had good vision, and never wore one, so I was unfamiliar with them. However, is it okay to keep contact lenses like this without storing within solution?

Then, I realized that she intended to abandon it.

I did not know whether it was because it was close to expiry, and she intended to discard it after taking it out, or to give up everything she could use to show her resolve.

Nitadori was turning into Stella.

Or rather, the opposite.

She was reverting back to being Stella. However, I did not know the intent behind this.

Was it more of a 'since it's late at night, I'm changing back', or 'to show my real self and interrogate this person before me?

I stood still, and Stella turned towards me.

She was staring at me with her grey right eye and brown left eye.

Once I clearly saw the difference in eye colors, I found them to be really strange, yet really beautiful.

&nbsp; "Please have a seat, sensei."

Stella said tersely.

"Ah, erm, eh, yes."

I did some suspicious gestures as I wondered where I should be sitting. So I could only sit on the bed, close to her.

"Heyo!"

I gave a good ol' fashioned grunt to hide my anxiety, and sat at the side of the bed.

After that, I found myself less than a meter away from Stella, who was on the chair.

Though we were closer while seated on the train, she was always shoulder to shoulder. I never once sat facing her.

Again, I had a new experience, an uncomfortable one.

Stella once looked down.

Whenever she talked, she would typically look at the other party in the eye. I was wondering if she was asking me to take the initiative, but probably not.

Stella placed her left hand on her left thigh, right before her eyes, and she was tapping her white slender hand atop the pocket there.

It was big, and probably had the capacity to store lots of things; however, it looked really flat. There might be a lump even if the pocket contained a smartphone.

At the same time, I could hear the friction between the hand and the fabric, along with the no-so-strong air-conditioning. I didn't know what this ritual meant, but Stella repeated the same motion over and over again.

Thanks to that, I had some time to think.

After some consideration, I got an answer.

I didn't know what Stella wanted to say--but at this moment, I should apologize first.

Give a proper apology like a man.

On the train, I was thinking 'if she's angry, I'll apologize'.

This overly pessimistic, reactive attitude just won't do.

So I decided to apologize first. Don't people say that attack is the best defense?

"Phew."

Stella took a short sigh, and then moved her left hand away from her thigh.

I saw her lips curl into a blissful smile, and thought of a metaphor, that a beast would grin before its prey.

She lifted her head slowly, and took a quick breath. She was about to speak.

No way will I lose.

I spoke up.

It's mano-a-mano, like a quickdraw duel in a Western flick. The first to shoot wins.

I took a deep breath.

I once saw a saying that when gunmen have a showdown, there would be occasions when both would fire at once.

During such situations, only a gunshot can be heard.

This was the situation that happened to both of us.

Both Stella and I said the same thing, at the exact same moment.

We were completely in sync.

I hastily lowered my head as I spoke, so I did not see the expression shown on Stella's face.



As I slowly lifted my head, I saw Stella lifting her head too.

In other words, we both apologized and lowered our heads at the same time.

If we were any closer, I might have knocked Stella in the head. That was very close.

We both lifted our heads, and our eyes met.

"Ah?" "Eh?"

What we said next was different. However, intent-wise, it was the same.

With stunned looks, we stared at each other.

I had the immediate urge to say something--but I stopped myself.

"Why?"

Good thing I didn't say anything. If I did, I would have spoken at the same time as Stella.

"Please talk." "Please talk."

And we were in unison again. Surely both sides must be feeling awkward by now.

I listened to Stella, and said,

"It's nothing...I wanted to apologize, so I did..."

"Why?"

"Ah, because I thought you're angry."

"Why"

"You see."

Stella's tone was utterly terrifying, so I blurted in response. I wanted to respond, but I sounded so arrogant, and I immediately regretted my words.

"No, I'm angry because you're saying that--"

Stella refuted, and stopped.

"You have no need to apologize at all, sensei!"

And then, she hollered.

Eh? Really?

I was completely overwhelmed by her, and so I thought.

"I came here to apologize!"

She said with utmost vigor. It appeared she was livider than whenever Meek was misunderstood.

But even so, I could not understand the reason at all.

"Eh-eh? Erm...huh? Erm...what's going on? Did you do...something to me, Nitadori?"

I was waving my hands with intrigue, utterly speechless, and completely sweating, but I barely managed to respond. Nitadori then widened her eyes.

Her right eye was a grey hue, her left brown. The whites around the pupils widened.

Her slightly opened scarlet lips were quivering.

I had been thinking nonchalantly that if she was utterly seething, she would be so furious that she would end up transforming.

"..."

Stella got up from her seat without uttering a word.

She immediately brought her face and body towards me.

"Eh?"

She grabbed my shoulders, and shoved me down.

"Huh?"

My head and back crashed into the mattress. Of course, it didn't hurt.

Just like this, I ended up lying face up on the bed instead of seated. My posture was a little crooked, and everything beneath the knees were beyond

the bed.

One second right after I was looking at the ceiling of the hotel room--

My vision was covered in a shadow, and I was being strangled.

Once my neck felt an icy sensation, I could hear Stella right atop my face, saying this, "Why!? Why!? Why?--I! Did this! To you!"

She did not exert more force onto the neck.

I would say she was 'touching' my neck, rather than choking it.

If 'this thing' meant choking me back on the train, she's not doing this now.

This was simply 'touching the neck', not choking it. She could have exerted more strength into it, Even so, her icy hands stroking my neck seemed to have removed much excess heat from my carotid artery, and I felt that it's comfortable.

"I! Tried to! Kill you!"

I was lying on the bed, and my neck felt comfy. I had relaxed completely as I heard Stella yell at me.

"I peeked into your manuscript! I was livid that Meek might die, so I tried to kill the person who did that!"

My eyes were facing the light, so I was able to see Stella's face, that her large eyes were brimming with tears.

I remembered this expression before; I saw it on the train.

Unlike the train ride though, Stella was not wearing glasses or contacts, and showed no malice on her face.

"I thought of killing you once! Even so! Why don't you hate me? Why aren't you hating me? Why did you forgive me immediately? Why were you willing to shield me?"

I heard her express her thoughts, and I thought, sorry to her, but "Let's hope the neighbor won't hear these shouts".

If this happened, what would happen?

I really hoped the hotel walls were sufficiently thick.

If the building materials are worse than I thought, let's just try to pull a fast one by say we're just practicing for an act,ahaha".

But even so, Stella (or Nitadori) was worrying about this trivial thing...she's probably been brooding over this ever since then.

To be honest, I'm really sorry.

I just felt that it was a good thing i had just apologized.

"Please! Tell me! WHy--"

"Erm."

Slowly, I stopped Stella from shouting further.

"Erm, it's fine not to yell like that. It's okay, calm down, alright?"

I tried to say so. This should be gentle enough, right?

"O-okay..."

Stella replied tersely.

Looking at her eyes, I found that she was on the verge of tears, but she managed to rein it in, and the rain-like tears did not drip upon me.

I felt that her hands were slowly leaving my neck.

I reached my hand out, and clamped Nitadori's hands down on the sides of my neck.

"Hii!"

Upon hearing the shriek, I knew that I scared her, so I said, "Ah, sorry. But I hope you'll touch my neck a little longer. Your hands are really cold, really comfortable."

"..."

"Really comfy and cold. I feel that I can forget a lot of things. I'll be happy if you keep it at for a longer time."

I did not want her to be terrified, so I begged her.

I did not want her to be any more terrified than she was, but at this point, it was too late.

But even so, I was troubled.

She asked something really unexpected.

Could I ask?

Could Stella understand if I didn't explain everything?

But even so, could I just act a bit and pass it off as some hysterical nonsense?

I didn't think it was the right thing to do either.

What should I do?

If I got choked to death, she could run away, but things wouldn't end up this well.

What should I do?

## Chapter 6-2 - June 19, I strangled him

I'm a high school girl and a rookie voice actress, currently strangling my classmate who is my upperclassman and a Bestselling Light Novel author.

This is my predicament at the moment.

"Really comfy and cold. I feel that I can forget a lot of things. I'll be happy if you keep it at for a longer time."

Sensei clamps my hands down from both sides, saying this, He appeared to be really comfy.

Like a child being coaxed.

I couldn't remember the face he showed the last time I strangled him.

Thus, I was going to remember his expression.

To remember this comfortable expression.

I didn't know the reason at all.

"Hm, you're asking me 'why do I forgive you'...but I don't know how to get you to understand..."

Once I saw that sensei was finally going to answer the question, I heaved a sigh of relief. I was calm. It felt like my hysteria a while ago was all a fake.

This posture of putting my legs on the bedside, leaning forward massively, and reaching my arms downwards on the person lying on the bed--

Certainly was naturally. Soon after, my waist will ache.

But since sensei hoped for me to do so, I decided to endure this posture until he let go of his warm hands.

I was going to end everything on this day.

The days of suffering, which lasted more than a month, was going to end.

I never had a proper meal. I had only a bento for lunch, and nothing else.

Miss Akane just said,

"If the room attack succeeds, let's go for a barbecue to celebrate tonight, shall we?"

It seemed she knew where the 24 hour shops were.

In this peculiar situation, I was imagining two people wearing paper aprons, enjoying themselves. I couldn't believe what I was thinking.

"I will hear whatever you have to say."

While continuing to choke sensei, I told him, "Tha-thanks. I don't know if I can express this well..."

Sensei tried to think, and before I knew it, he eased the strength in his hands. I guess he couldn't focus on his neck anymore.

I should be able to remove my hands from his neck if I wanted to, but I didn't. Since he said these icy hands were very comfy, I would continue putting them on his neck until he told me to stop.

My waist will hurt, but so what?

"Erm, I--"

I heard sensei speak,

"I think I'm the type of person 'who won't care even if I die'. So I think."

I couldn't understand.

But if I did not try to understand, I would never know the answer.

To understand his words, I tried my best, and asked, "Erm...sensei...you're the type who thinks 'my moment of death is just a matter of destiny', right?"

"Well, you can say so, or maybe not..."

It's not much of an answer, but I wouldn't give up.

"I'm going to ask what may be an unpleasant question, but please tell me, sensei--did you try to kill yourself before?"

I made up my mind.

I prepared this question in mind, for I thought perhaps there was a need to.

As I had vented to sensei in that fanmail, I had tried to kill myself a few times, and searched for ways to kill myself on the internet.

But I never tried them before (and I never failed).

I never had the urge to do so.

So, even if sensei was to answer 'yes'--

I couldn't agree with the idea that 'even if I nearly got killed, I can still forgive'. No, I didn't want to agree with it.

I never had the thought that 'it doesn't matter because I once tried to kill myself', and never once did I intend to have such a notion.

Sensei was momentarily taken aback, and simply answered.

"Failed a suicide? I never did, you know?"

And then, he continued,

"No matter what happens, I do think living is a wonderful thing. I have no intention of killing myself at all."

It didn't seem like he was lying or acting.

I didn't think sensei was the type to lie.

While sensei lied in the infirmary and the AV room, leaving aside what was said, it sounded too fake to me.

"Then--"

Why are you willing to forgive me easily even when you were nearly killed by me?

I swallow these words I was about to say.



For I had asked those words before.

I recalled the events that transpired in the audio visual room, "Sensei...do you remember the words Endou-sensei said when helping with the pamphlets?"

"Hm? --Erm...how I ripped off from the Siege of Iwaya Castle?

Why would I be thinking about that? No,

"No! What I mean is that 'Endou-sensei found the 'Vice Versa' author's view of life and death is a little weird'."

"Ah, you're referring to that. Yes, I do remember."

"What do...you think...?"

"I find that it's correct."

Throughout this ordeal, this was the first time I found everything to be suspicious.

Sensei seemed rather calm.

It seemed he had decided how to answer my question.

And I got the feeling that 'though he won't lie, he would try to avoid answering the question directly'.

I didn't know what he was thinking. Since I didn't, I could only ask.

But the questions I had prepared beforehand appeared to be useless.

What should I do?

What should I ask?

Such were the developments, and I went this far, but I couldn't think of anything.

My mind was completely blank.

While I was in this 'pinch'--

*"Think of something!"*

I was suddenly reminded of the face of the person who proposed to me.

It was just for a moment, but I remembered the words he said,

"Sensei--"

I decided to ask this terrifying question,

"Sensei, were you once nearly killed, before I tried to?"

"Eh?"

He squeaked in surprise,

"Eh, erm--well..."

Once I saw the wavering look in sensei's eyes, I was certain he had such an experience before.

He was once nearly killed.

Not once, not twice.

After such painful experiences, he was already numb to being nearly killed.

So--

When was that?

Where?

By who?

I had a rough idea of sensei's past.

For he himself told me this on the train.

Back then, I did not think he was lying.

But in his words, there was a place he did not want me to enter.

And it nearly got him killed.

When was that?

Where?

By who?

No--

Even if I did know, so what could I do?

What could I do if I was to pursue the painful past he was unwilling to talk about?

I understood something.

I knew that sensei had a past he was unwilling to tell others.

And thus, his abnormal action after I did that.

Isn't this enough? Thus, I got it--

All I needed to next was to apologize, I suppose.

While I was feeling a breeze of relief in my heart while having this thought--

"Really comfy and cold. I feel that I can forget a lot of things. I'll be happy if you keep it at for a longer time."

I clearly recalled the words sensei just said.

Why would I remember that?

Why was it echoing in my mind?

Why--

"Eri-chan."

I heard my name being called,

"Hey--"

I,

"Answer me--"

Blurted out,

"Sensei,"

What was,

"Were you--"

On,

"Once--"

My,

"Nearly killed--"

Mind,

"By aunty?"

Just say no.

Just say no.

Just say no.

"That's weird...did I mention this in my fanmail reply?"

Say no--

"Maybe I did, I forgot..."

Say no--

"No...probably not...no way I would have...erm, Nitadori, how did you know?  
Are you--an esper or something?"

Sensei gave the sheepish look of someone whose prank was discovered.  
Looking back at him, I recalled the conversation I had with Miss Akane, *"Do you think someone who was once a devil can become an angel?"*

*"Certainly, and the reverse holds true too."*

"The first memory I had in life--"

I was seated on the chair, slumped like a corpse, "Was when I was strangled by mom."

I watched sensei describe his past vividly. He let my hands go, and prompted me to return to my seat, sitting upright himself.

"I cannot recall...whether it was when I was two, three...or four--the only thing I remember well is the feeling. The area around my neck felt really warm with her touch."

Sensei was being his usual self.

No different from when he was on that train, answering my questions, he was describing his past.

Of course, since he was doing the same thing.

"As for this part, I don't really remember, so it's hard for me to explain, but mom often told me "You cannot go out today". I didn't know the reason, but whenever that happened, there would be a snake-like bruise around my neck. Back then, I was really surprised, wondering what happened."

Sensei chirped on, as though narrating the movie he had seen the previous day.

"And soon after, the bruises didn't appear as often. I guess the skills improved."

Sensei's not a mirror, so I didn't know the expression I showed.

"I remembered one day, the last time I was strangled. I didn't know when it was, probably around five, but this time, I remembered it really well. I would sleep at night, since I was a child, so I slept at around eight or so--"

I don't want to hear this.

That was what I earnestly thought from the bottom of my heart.

*"What's with those eyes? Acting cool?"*

*"Are those natural? So disgusting."*

*"Are you local or Asian? Choose one!"*

*"Your eyes aren't small. Did you correct them with operation? Being rich sure*

*is nice."*

And then, I recalled the rude words others had said before, and felt that they were all child's play.

No matter what I remember in the future, surely there is no way I will be as terrified as I am now. It felt as though the aching graze was stabbed at.

"Once I went to sleep, I felt that the sides of my neck was warm. I initially thought I was dreaming, but soon after, I could somehow open my eyes, and see that. In the dark house, my mom, who said she was going to work, appeared before me. Then the world quickly turned dark, and I really went to sleep--Nltadori, please get me the tea over there. I'm really thirsty."

Sensei maintained the same tone the entire time, whether it was when he was narrating his near-murder experience, or when he asked me for tea.

In a robotic manner, I took out the unopened tea PET bottle from the convenience store bag, and handed it to sensei.

"Thanks. You can have some if you want. The water bottles aren't opened."

And then, sensei heartily took about three gulps, before capping it.

"When I woke up, it was already morning. I had a vague feeling of someone slapping at my face, and when I opened my eyes, a police officer was before me, and that took me by surprise. Mom was around too, crying really hard. I wasn't sure what happened. "Did you know of anyone who came by? Did someone touch your neck?" but the police officer said to me."

Everything sensei said was real--

At the very least, I had a feeling sensei was being truthful with what he remembered.

"So I answered, 'no, I don't remember'. Of course, I was lying. Then the police officer told me, 'your mother assumed you were killed by someone. She was anxious'. Ah, so I was nearly killed by mom. She strangled me a few times when I was asleep. That day, she really tried to, thought that she succeeded, and then went to work to fabricate an alibi, even calling the police. But I never died. Ever since then, since that day, I never felt the warm of the fingers on my neck. I was

raised normally, started school, reading...and you know the rest, so I'll cut the rest--Nitadori?"

"Yes."

I was listening.

"Ah good. I thought you've fallen asleep with your eyes opened."

I could never do anything that convenient.

If only this was a dream, so I thought.

"Ahh, that's how it is. Your deductions are really amazing, Nitadori. Really amazing. I don't know how much you know...but it does seem like I manage to answer your questions successfully, so I guess that's it. To be honest, I never intended to discuss this, and I was thinking of something rude, like 'if I don't say it, how do I try to bluff my way through'? Good thing I did say it. It feels good."

Sensei said. He looked really lively,

"So ever since then, i was never nearly killed by mom, and I guess it'll never happen again. After getting this apartment, I was finally able to lock my room, and it's a little relieving. I can sleep peacefully like this. Maybe there's a part in my heart that thinks 'mom is scary'."

Sensei said with nonchalance.

And so I understood why he locked the door the previous day.

I also understood the reason why he spent quite the hefty price to rent that apartment.

And then, it was a day late, but I understood.

That when aunty showed the excitement that shocked sensei, that too was an act. I did not realize it.

How long has sensei's mother been acting?

Sensei himself did not realize the sinking feeling in me, and continued on, "But! Don't tell anyone else what I told you! Ah, I know you'll keep my secret, so this worry is unnecessary. Yep."

As for why sensei's mother tried to kill him--

I had no idea.

As a single mother, perhaps the child was a huge burden to her? Or did she hate to raise her child? I could think of a few possibilities immediately, but it didn't matter.

I didn't want to know.

No matter the reason, trying to kill someone was an unforgivable act.

Unforgivable--

"Sensei."

I stumbled to my feet.

"I'll use the toilet."

"Eh? Ah, yes."

I passed the bed, and went to the toilet.

Over there, I knelt at the latrine--

And puked.

I did not eat anything, so all I spat all was a shockingly yellow, sour stomach juice.

I was feeling unbearable, uncomfortable, and wanted to ease myself as I puked, but I could not excrete anything other than some stomach juices. It had been a while since I had this feeling.

My body was creaking, groaning, yet I continued to vomit "Hey--you alright?"

The door wasn't locked, so I could hear sensei's voice from behind, a warm palm on my back, "Nitadori! Don't vomit when there's nothing in your stomach! They say that stomach fluids can corrode the throat and teeth! Calm down! Okay?"

He rubbed my back gently as he said this,

"Ahh..."

I weakly collapsed upon the icy tiled floor.



I slowly lifted my head, a trail of tears flowing from each eye, and the nausea vanished as though washed away by these tears.

"Rinse your mouth properly! This cup isn't used!"

Sensei opened the tap, let the water flow, and handed the cup to me, "For you."

I slowly got up, and received the cup,

"Thank you."

I answered an obviously worried, flustered sensei, and brought the water to my mouth.

After some rinsing, I slowly spit the water back into the basin, and refilled--I repeated this motion many times.

Finally, I drank some water. It appeared my throat was cleaned.

"Thank goodness--the towel hanging there can be used. Take your time to calm down."

Sensei said, probably having seen my face in the mirror. He exited the toilet.

"Sorry for saying some things that made you uncomfortable."

And finally, he apologized.

But there was no need.

Sensei did not close the door as he left the toilet, probably out of deliberation.

After wiping my mouth and face with a towel, I lifted my face--

And found a terrible looking person on the vast mirror.

This girl's scowling, and the irises of her eyes were different.

Once I saw that foolish sight, I laughed.

And the person laughing in the mirror laughed back at me.

The reason why I felt so nauseous--

Was that at that moment, I really hated sensei's mother.

She wanted to kill, no matter her reason.

And then, at the next moment, I recalled what I did.

Was I not the same?

Did I not try to kill sensei before too?

And for such a trivial reason.

I had no right to hate sensei's mother.

And of course, she and I should be reproached, hated.

But sensei forgave me with a smile.

Did she realize that sensei already knew about?

If she did, would she be tormented, just like me?

It not, will she continue to be tormented for the next ten years and so?

I did not know the answer--

But I felt I understood what she was thinking when they decided to move houses.

Surely she would never try to kill again.

Just like me now.

I was really opinionated.

How foolish was I as a person?

How selfish was I as a person?

Since then, somewhere in my heart, I thought, "Surely sensei forgave me because he likes me."

I thought that to sensei, I was a 'very special' person.

I was really too pompous.

That wasn't it.

And I knew it.

To sensei, I'm not the 'special one'.

In this world, sensei's the 'special one'.

His first memories in life were actually about how he nearly got strangled to death by his mother?

Sensei's life was way beyond what I could imagine.

"Why, you ask? Because I like you, so that means I have to forgive you, right?"

I was a hopeless idiot for hoping he would say those words.

I seemed to have made one too many wishful thinking, unable to accept the cruel reality as a result.

Maybe it's because I enjoy daydreaming a little too much.

That daydream's 'Vice Versa'.

This fantasy story saved me when I was in peril.

"What do I do...?"

I muttered to myself in the mirror, with this pitiful voice.

I no longer needed to act.

I would no longer utter the spell 'time to play'.

I asked the mirror,

"Is there...a next spell?"

I felt the one quietly smiling back at me on the mirror was saying this, "Think

about one for yourself."

# Time to Pray

June 20th, Friday.

I entered the control room of the studio, waiting for the After Record to begin.

Fewer than ten minutes to 10am, and the voice actors were already gathered in the recording studio.

Of course, Nitadori arrived far earlier than I did, and was repeatedly greeting the seniors.

Once I saw her, the handsome voice actor portraying Shin entered.

Once Nitadori spotted him, she stood before him bowing respectfully.

I felt that she bowed more deeply towards him as compared to everyone else, or perhaps it was just me imagining things.

So I thought about various things, and what happened yesterday.

I recalled how that detective had just excitedly revealed my circumstances.

I was sitting on the bed of the hotel room, thinking.

People did say 'when you have a tummyache, vomit, and you will feel fine'. Personally, I had a few vomiting experiences, so I understood that logic.

Also, the motion to 'vomit' is because there is something bad inside the body (the stomach), an action to lighten the body by removing them.

Surely the matter I couldn't tell others of was the same.

By saying it out, I felt a lot better.

In other words, I was basically the barber in 'The King Has Donkey Ears'. I wanted to sound out to others, but I couldn't. It was a painful experience.

So that's how it was, so I feel really refreshed.

It was the first time I could mention anything I couldn't say over the past ten years and so, so it felt really good.

Initially, I was trying my best to think 'how do I avoid mentioning this when explaining'--

But when the famed detective hit the mark, I felt it didn't matter.

At this point, trying to hide this matter would seem unnatural, so it was really strange.

Of course, I didn't think it was fine to tell anyone. I only said so only because it was Nitadori.

I felt that Nitadori would keep this secret.

Or rather, I felt lucky that it was Nitadori who was willing to hear me out.

But the one mistake I made was that it made her nauseous, and that she ran to the toilet, wanting to vomit...

But even so--

How did Nitadori figure it out?

Was I being too callous in saying enough to hint at the truth? I didn't remember that.

Or was it that anyone reading the entire 'Vice Versa' series can figure it out?

Is it that by reading into the work repeatedly, one can understand the subconsciousness of the author? Like what Endou-sensei said?

In that case, this would probably be my diagnosis.

"This author has no girlfriend, no friends, and can only write his delusion disgusting self-insert wishes, a deplorable person so pitiful that nobody can look at him in the eyes.

While feeling mortified by this thought, I might have the mistaken assumption to think 'now this is my work!'

Having my own misunderstood delusions is awesome! Stories are basically feeding an author's delusions to the readers!

Not only did I have such thoughts, I guessed for me, I'm able to live a steady life over these two years because I've been venting my emotions through novels.--

In that case, it all makes sense.

While thinking as I sat on the bed, the phone in the room rang.

"Woah!"

I was truly taken aback.

For the first time, I knew how noisy the room's phone was.

"Isn't this too loud? But if we're showering, the sound has to be this loud. Morning call is the same too."

In any case, I could only pick up the receiver to stop it from ringing.

I got up from the bed, and reached out to the phone next to the mini TV. I picked it up, and brought it to my ear.

"Hello."

"Hello sensei--this is Kamishiro. You seem to be done talking. Please allow me to retrieve Milady."

I couldn't refuse this. I opened the door, and invited her in.

She entered the toilet, and whispered something to Nitadori inside. I was by the bedside, and did not know what they were talking about.

Soon after, Miss Kamishiro went alone before me, to retrieve the wig and others.

But even so, this call was way too coincidental. How did she know? I didn't think she could hear us talking from outside the door.

Miss Kamishiro turned to the right, and showed me her left ear, with a cabled wire attached to it. It seemed she had guessed what I was thinking.

"Sorry, but I did a few things on Milady's back just a while back."

"..."

Speaking of which, I did discover a small round object stuck on Nitadori's back when I patted her.

"Why is there a button here?"

That was what I thought.

Thinking back, my final conclusion was basically 'ahh, I guess it's some trendy lingerie design or something', and didn't pay any mind. To be honest, I wasn't in the mood to notice that.

In other words, it was a microphone, or a bug. This miniature device allows for voice reception and transmission through electric signals.

I had a thought.

That one day, I will be able to see all the 'secret weapons' Miss Kamishiro has.

So Miss Kamishiro brought a silent Nitadori out of my room.

I did not know what to say to Nitadori as I watched her leave, her back facing me.

She never turned back, and vanished from my eyes.

When the time slowly struck close to 10am, the start of the After Record, I was overwhelmed with terror.

That was because, after what happened the previous night, I had a nice sleep-

-

But after entering the studio, I suddenly had a thought, "Is it fine for me to just reveal this matter this easily?"

It's relieving to share a secret, but this selfish thought was one-sided on my part.

I never considered Nitadori's feelings when she heard those words.



"Nearly killed by mom? Ahaha, not at all."

Back then, should I not have lied as such, even if I had to force myself?

The reason why she was so terrified that she puked was because I was too honest in my answer.

Before then, I did press her hands down onto the sides of my neck; that might be a reason too.

Thinking back, I shouldn't have done so.

No, I really shouldn't have done so.

If only I hadn't done so.

It was then did I realize I made a preposterous mistake. That selfish act made me uncomfortable. I was shivering, my spine tingling.

"You alright? Still not recovered?"

The editor-in-charge, seated next to me, asked me worriedly.

I was grateful for his concern, but it wasn't the case. It would have great if it was a cold.

"Ah...no...I'm fine."

"Good then. Speak out if you feel unwell."

"Thanks. I'll do so when the time comes."

So I answered, and I thought,

"If I'm feeling unwell."--huh?

How much discomfort did I cause Nitadori the previous night?

What startling thing did I do?

This time I was the one having a tummyache, and I had the urge to vomit.

The After Record began, and I was fighting on.

Not against sleepiness, for I had a good sleep.

But against myself, who was unable to stop thinking.

I thought of Nitadori and Stella the previous day, imagining what they would say to me in the future, and was starting to feel afraid. As long as I had a thought, I would shake my head, literally trying to shake it off my mind.

I really hated my ability of conjuring delusions.

"Are you really alright?"

The editor-in-charge asked me three times during the A part.

And so, the first half of the After Record, the most arduous moment finally ended, and it was break time.

After waiting a while, I went to the toilet.

I always did so. If I did head out immediately, I would be going to the toilet side by side with the veteran voice actors who were active before I was born.

Of course, I felt that I was cordial with everyone, but I couldn't be that honest. I really would not know what I should say, and I would act suspiciously.

Even if it wasn't the case, it would be awkward conversing in the toilet.

Even if it wasn't the case, I really wasn't in the mood today.

Each break's fifteen minute long.

I waited for eight minutes, and left the booth.

And once I was done, there was a drinks vending machine on the corridor.

While there was a pot of coffee prepared in the audio visual room to enjoy, I will get sick drinking too much coffee, and it seemed it would agitate my stomach, more so on this day.

"Yo sensei!"

As I lifted the PET bottle, the voice actor portraying Shin patted my shoulder from the back, He would greet me all the time, but his usual speaking voice was really similar to Shin, and it really intrigued me.

"Ah...hello."

I wasn't in a good mood, but I could not simply ignore him. I turned my body around, and nodded respectively.

With that hearty smile that made him really popular with the ladies, the voice actor said, "You don't have anything on your neck now?"

"Erm...it's rather hot now."

I lied. The air-conditioning in the studio was really strong, and to be honest, it was cold.

"Well, since it's a gift from your girlfriend, you should have it on at all times, whether it's midsummer or showering. Now's the time to show your love."

I really didn't know how to retort.

"Haah...well, it seems like it'll leave sweat marks."

So I said,

"You don't seem fine, you know? Speaking of which, you look pale. Still not recovered from your flu last week?"

"No, not at all...just something on the mind."

I couldn't lie anymore, and tried to brush the matter aside, but the one person causing this bother to me passed by behind me.

Of course, i did not intend to talk to Nitadori in the recording studio.

But the voice actor had other intentions,

"Ah! Wait a moment, Nitadori! Good timing! Wait a sec!"

"..."

Nitadori had to stop in her tracks, and she turned around, her face stiffened as she looked at us.

Surely she was fuming.

Or maybe unwell.

Did those words affect Nitadori's job?

It'll be great if it didn't.

Various thoughts appeared in my mind, and my stomach started to ache again..

"Sensei has something on his mind, and he's not looking good. Say some things to comfort him."

"Wh-why...me?"

I was thinking that her reaction was normal.

And also, I was wondering, did the voice actor call in Nitadori to say a few words because he knew everything?

The man who knew the truth. The hidden ruler. The final boss--

Once I had this thought, 'no way, no way', I immediately denied this in my mind.

"Hm, just a feeling."

The voice actor boldly answered,

This isn't much of an answer.

"Well, it's not much of an answer...an-anyway, if I don't know what's on his mind, I don't know how to console him."

"Ah, you're right..."

The voice actor turned his handsome face towards me,

"Hey sensei, what's on your mind? Try talking. Tell this big brother here, or maybe, just talk. You see, there isn't much time left for for this break, so just say something."

I guess it's a rare experience for an author to be prompted by the voice of his protagonist being animated.

"Ah, well, how do I put it..."

I wasn't really being interrogated, but I spoke up, and I couldn't stop.

"I once spoke to someone, and I was worried of that person would be feeling uncomfortable or angry, or despise me...when I was answering questions, I went and said too much, probably something weird. I thought I might be deemed a 'weirdo', I guess. No, it's better to be thought of one. But I was wondering if I was thought of as a 'disgusting person', and troubled that person instead."

I didn't intend to say it out.

I didn't intend to reveal these matters.

I was so scared of looking, I did not know what face Nitadori was showing. I lowered my gaze, staring at the tummy of the person before me.

After five seconds, the voice actor said,

"Hm, looks like we have to ask that person--am I right? Nitadori."

She did not answer.

"Eh? Nitadori's--gone."

I too lifted my head.

I couldn't see Nitadori on the corridor.

Ah, I'm hated now, surely, so I thought.

Though I thought so, maybe I was just thinking too much. I might have been thinking too much into it, and made a hasty conclusion based on my delusions.

I could not simply admit to this.

I could not allow myself to bring my delusions into reality.

If I admitted to it, I would think they were real.

The moment I let myself calm down a bit, I heard 'Shin's voice, "What? Sensei--are you hated?"

"Yeah."

I answered.

I had to admit.

Strangely, once the recording of the B part started, my stomach stopped aching.

Was it because I said it out? Was there stomach medicine in the PET bottle? Did my worries vanished at once? Or was it all of the above?

First off, the rehearsals went well, and it was Nitadori's moment.

In this show, Madoko would have the scene with the longest lines.

Watching Nitadori left me unbearable, and hearing her voice left me unbearable, but I had nowhere to run.

In the control room, I watched the finished footage as I heard the voice.

The middle of part B.

Shin really couldn't say that Sin had caused a huge mess to his life, and lied to Yui.

Shin was really bad at lying, so Yui, who saw through the lies, questioned Shin. However, Shin, unable to say the truth, diverted the topic amazingly.

Yui left the classroom in a huff, and Shin stood there. The one to console and encourage him was Madoko, who did not have a name.

The voice actress portraying Yui finished the recording, silently left the microphone, and retreated to the back.

There was a pause amounting to a few seconds, as the footage showed Sin, hiding at the Tsumizonos' and eating miso pancakes, not knowing he was the cause of it all.

During this time, Nitadori, who had been seated the entire time, got up from the chair, and stood side by side with the voice actor before the microphone.

Airing on this day was the completed footage. The footage showed a closeup of Madoko, who returned to the classroom, raging at Shin as she pointed at him.

"Hey! Tsumizono! Go chase after her!"

"But..."

There was a weak response.

"She ran away hoping you'll give chase! Go explain everything clearly!"

"Is that, so--"

Shin, who was supposed to say 'is that so?' instead, was cut off.

"That is so!"

Madoko affirmed. At this moment, she showed a cheerful face.

"..."

"So please face it head on with courage! It's too early to give up! If chasing after her makes her hate you more, then we'll talk about it then! I won't take responsibility, but I'll continue to think of you two as friends like before! Alright, get going! I'm going to kick your ass if you come back alone!"

"What's with that...but thanks."

Shin smiled as he left the classroom, and Madoko silently watched him, the screen now showing her back.

As it was a change of scenes again, the rehearsal ended.

Nitadori's acting was perfectly fine, and the sound supervisor did not give any instructions.

While everyone was giving their all for this--

I kept thinking about my own issues.

Perhaps it's better for us not to take the same ride the following week.

If I sat at my old seat, and Nitadori didn't show up, what do I do?

If she did show up, and was unwilling to say anything, what should I do?

But--

If I were to take another train, yet Nitadori took the same old train ride...

Just imagining that left my gut winced.

Am I out of the medicine in the PET bottle? So I thought, and had another two gulps of water, but the situation didn't improve.

Maybe I should take absence the following week.

I couldn't get a full attendance award, and it's fine for an author not to be around.

Most importantly, I wouldn't have to take the train.

So I thought--

And I heaved a small sigh of relief.

Despite how vexed the author felt, the After Record continued smoothly.

The rehearsal ended smoothly, and there was not much time left, so the recording for part B was officially beginning.

Shin and Yui had a quarrel, and Yui left the classroom.

Nitadori again stood before the microphone, portraying Madoko.

This might be the last time I would see Nitadori acting in the recording studio.

So I thought as I looked beyond the glass panel.

"Hey! Tsumizono! Go chase after her!"

Madoko said,

"But..."

Shin answered.

"She ran away hoping you'll give chase! Go explain everything clearly!"

Madoko ordered.

"Is that, so--"

Shin said.

"Yes!"

Madoko cut him off.

"..."

Shin was silent, and Madoko said,

"So please face it head on with courage! It's too early to give up! I'll be praying for you here! English, pray, now's the time to pray! Time to pray! This is



my spell. So it's fine! Both of you will surely get on well with each other!!"



Eh?

"What's with that...but thanks."

The voice actor continued his outstanding performance, ending this sequence.

"Nitadori."

I could hear the sound supervisor's voice. That voice could reach the booth, through the microphone.

"Yes."

I heard Nitadori's voice.

"Brilliant ab-lib! A little too much on the change. No, it's passionate, and the lines are great. What do you think?"

"Yes, I wanted to say this no matter what, so I did."

"..."

The sound supervisor held the switch down, and said nothing.

"Sensei."

He then called me, and I, looking beyond the glass towards the light green glasses, turned back.

"What do you think of the ab-lib?"

The scriptwriter of this episode was in this control room. The series screenwriter, along with the overall director, were both present.

But even so, he went to me first.

And I answered,

"Can I...tell her personally?"

The sound supervisor widened his eyes. And then, he turned his face towards

the director seated next to me.

"This is fine."

The director calmly noted. The sound supervisor nodded, and said, "Then, sensei, please."

He then switched on the microphone linking to the recording booth, moving it up, and pulled the chair back slightly.

I got up from my chair, took a few steps, and brought my face towards the microphone.

And then, through the glass panel, I saw Nitadori's face.

Her eyes were looking right into my gaze.

I took a quick breath, and spoke up,

With a voice loud enough for everyone to hear.

"I 'owe you one'! Stella!"

While everyone might be taken aback.

These words probably reach this smiling her.

June 26th, Thursday.

The season of plum rain was at work, and the train moved on as it poured.

I was seated at my old seat, and from the backpack on my right, I took out my smartphone, I activated it, and took a photo of the rain-stained window.

I never took a photo within the train before, but I had a feeling that it would be the last time I would take this train on Thursday, at this time, and suddenly felt reluctant.

"Hey, what are you taking?"

I heard a voice from above.

"It's the last time...so, the window.

I answered as I reached my right hand out to lift the bag, and empty the chair.

Then, I saw the face of the person talking to me.

"Eh?"

I blurted out in surprise.

I had assumed it would be Nitadori--but it was Stella.

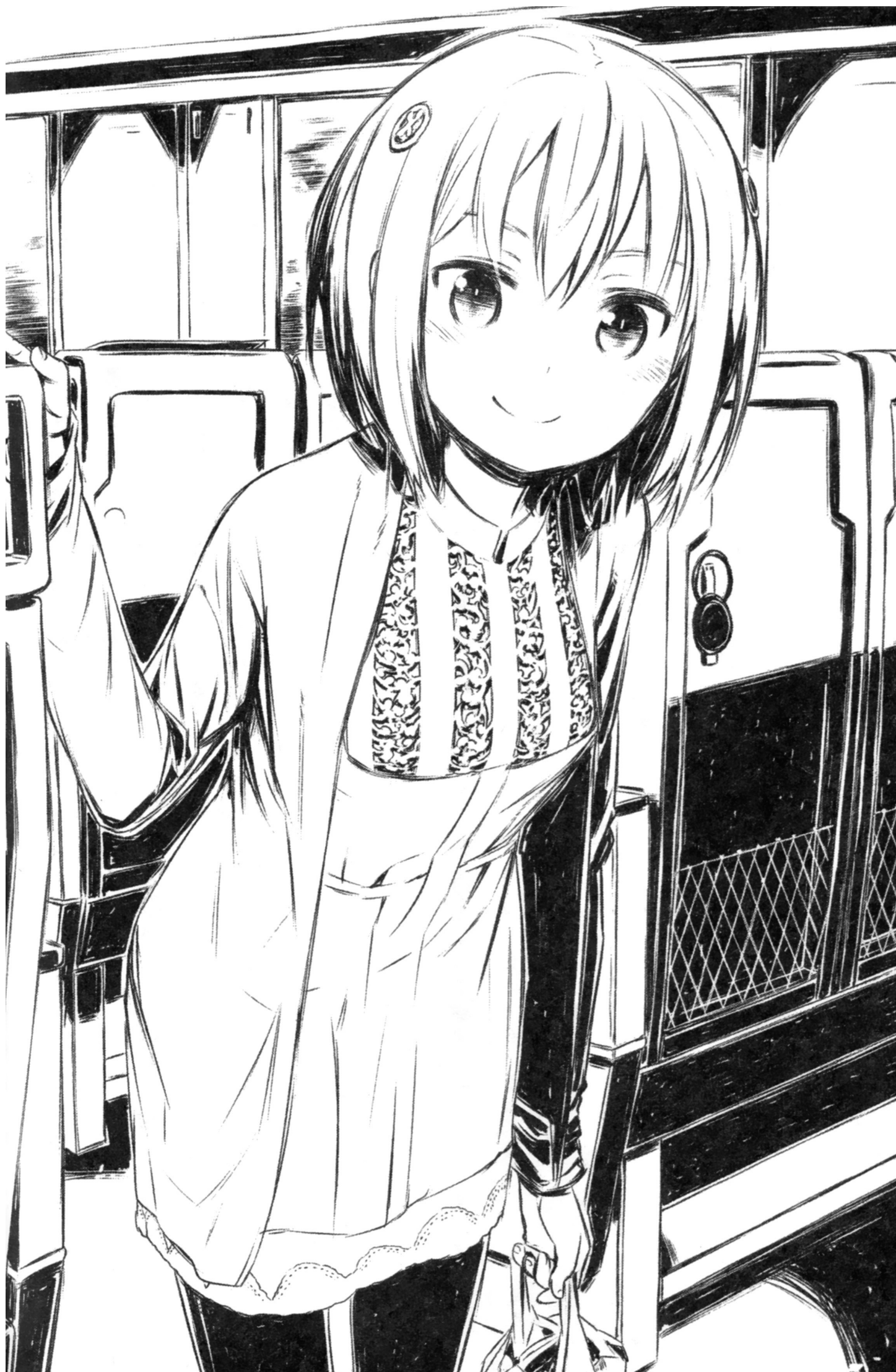
"Thank you."

Stella swayed her light fluffy short hair as she quickly sat down.

No, looking closely, I could see that though she wasn't wearing glasses, she was wearing her colored contact.

Her hair showed Stella.

Her eyes showed Nitadori.



In this situation, how should I address her? Nitalla? Stedori?

Leaving aside, I asked,

"What happened...to your hair...?"

"Shocked?"

Nitadori asked cheerful.

"I am."

I answered.

From Monday till today, just two hours ago...

She was the usual bespectacled Nitadori.

"Starting tomorrow, I intend to remove my contact lens and go for the After Record. This is to prepare myself mentally, so I'm trying to get used to it."

She's not using formal language, so it's Nitadori mode, but her appearance resembled Stella. It's complicated.

And I was really surprised by what she said.

"So, you're going to work, not intending to hide anything...?"

"Hm, maybe I won't. I discussed this with the manager. I'll observe everyone's reactions tomorrow before deciding. Name-wise, I might end up using my real name."

"Wh-wh--why?"

"Whwhwhy?"

"Why? --Ah, no, I'm not trying to tell you off, not at all. I thought you would maintain the black hair. So I'm trying to say, what prompted the change of heart?"

"Hm, I know this will end up revealed sooner or later. It doesn't seem like it'll be a good thing if this gets revealed unexpectedly, and I don't want to become a weird talking point. To be honest, it's rather scary to keep living without being able to move vigorously. And so--"

"And so?"

"My hair, and my eyes. I think these can be called 'selling' points--so I finally managed to convince myself."

"..."

I was really surprised.

These were the causes of her negative memories, but she wanted to use them as 'selling points'. How much resolve did she put in?

How much stronger had she become?

With a cheerful smile, Nitadori said,

"I don't want to worry just because I'm comparing myself to others. I'm--me."

"..."

"Great line, isn't it? I might have this thought because of a certain person."

I tilted my head, asking,

"Erm...who would that be?"

"A certain dull-witted person who misunderstands a little too much."

Who would that be? I thought, and I got it.

"Ah! Ahh...I see..."

"Probably not, I guess?"

I watch Nitadori smile happily, and in my heart,

I thanked that person.

To Mr Voice Actor, thank you very much, really.

I really am glad that he was portraying as Nitadori.

Like usual, Miss Kamishiro was dressed in her posh suit, seated at the opposite side.

"Milady, this."

Nitadori received the bag, and handed it over to me.



"Please accept this. This is a heartfelt gift from me, sensei."

I saw that there were three PET bottles of tea inside, along with some sea salt potato chips. I really hoped there wasn't any transmitter inside.

"Thanks for your goodwill, I'll accept this--"

And so I accepted, but not without asking in a half-joking, half-tentative manner.

"But after eating this, I have to answer any question, right?"

"Of course."

She immediately answered.

The short light brown hair matched the brown eyes. I had never seen Nitadori like this before.

"Over ten times or so, I've asked you various questions, sensei. Now for the next question."

She stared right at me, and immediately asked. I was holding the bag of potato chips, and had not opened it, "What do you think of me?"

It was too vague,

"What do you mean?"

So while holding the bag, I tilted my head, asking,

"Well, a few options--interesting? Annoying? Hard to deal with? Special? Cute? Weird? Which is the best answer? Or...others?"

There were many options, but the best option was 'others'.

"Others--"

I answered honestly, as usual,

"I hope to use you as the basis of a story."

"Ah..."

Nitadori widened her eyes, her mouth agape, and she muttered, "I never thought this would be your answer..."

And she quipped,

"Just like an author."

While opening the bag of potato chips, I answered,

"I'm an author."

And I popped the first piece into my mouth.

# Light Novel Q&A - Please feel free to ask us any LightNovel's questions!

*Is Vice Versa a web novel?*

*If it is, where do I read it?*

## **From Explosions**

The following will contain heavy spoilers from 'Vice Versa', so please pay attention.

Someone told me "Vice Versa" was a web novel.

I was shocked to hear that. What he mentioned was further beyond what was sold.

I was shocked to learn that in that story, it's said that the homunculus Meek will die in a war.

But Shin of Reputation had an amazing power, Using his power, Meek became a gemstone and kept on living. It's a pretty shocking story.

Is this part correct?

And if anyone knows of what happens after, please tell me!

I want to ask him, but he's out far away.

Thank you everyone for your answers!

*Sent: XXXX/X/X X:X:X Replies: 6*

*That's not real*

### **From Really Loves Shin**

I don't know who you heard it from, but I think that's not true.

If it is, Dengeki Bunko would have announced it.

Till now, nobody has been hiding the fact that their own works were originally web novels.

*Probably not*

### **From YuiYui**

I don't think the author's going to kill off a popular character like Meek.

You got duped there, didn't you?

*Don't spread rumors*

### **From Pluto**

Do you think I'll be so stupid to let Meek die? Hahh?

*That guy's definitely delusional*

### **From Sin's real wife.**

That guy's probably delusional, right?

There's someone who really believes the fanfiction is 'an author's original'?

I won't fault you there, but try asking him again.

I don't know where that guy is though.

*You're duped there*

### **From Shirotaro Matsumoto**

Heh, you were duped there.

Only an idiot like you would have been duped.

How can Meek die?

That author's a veteran.

He knows this very well. That's why he's not going to kill off a popular character. (TN Snark: RIP Yatori)

*I think it's a lie.*

### **From The end**

I guess the author won't kill off a popular character through that way.

But if it's me, I might try writing such a plotline.

The girl staring at the screen--

"UMU!"

Grunted like a Sengoku warrior, and got up from her seat.

# Afterword, Special Synopsis

## Volume 4

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, strangled by the obi of my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress--Time to Judo-->> When our relationship stabilized, Nitadori suddenly said to me, "Oh, right, sensei! Let's play judo!".

The protagonist started to play judo for real, gradually impressed, and finally made it to the Nationals! However, the next submission deadline for 'Vice Versa' is closing in...can he continue tossing around while writing his novels!?

The startling stage shall be set on the tatamis, the plot of the 4th volume filled with manly sweat!

## Volume 5

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, forced to marry by my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress --Time to Marry-->> The Protagonist managed to win silver at the Nationals, and submitted the manuscript on time.

As a famous person in school, he's popular with the girls too, beaming away. Nitadori's crying tears of blood, but she couldn't do anything as she told him to do it. At this moment, Miss Kamishiro brought some shocking news. That is, Nitadori's already 20, and has a prearranged fiance overseas!

A fire is lit under Nitadori, and she pursues the protagonist! Turbulent times in volume 5!

## Volume 6

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, having a war against my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress --Time to Fight-- >>

The protagonist never noticed that Nitadori was trying to woo him. A fuming Nitadori finally transforms into the blond 'Super Nitadori' and starts to attack mercilessly! The protagonist uses the wardrobe he inherits from his mother as a weapon, but is unable to completely withstand the attacks coming from behind him in class. When he was stabbed by the After Record script and about to die of blood loss, an unexpected person suddenly saved him--

80% battles, hardcore combat scenes! This is this 6th volume!



## Volume 7

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, and I feel my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress doesn't exist? Is it all my own selfish delusions--Time to Realize-->>

The anime was aired successfully, and the protagonist returns to his lonely school life. Doing this, he suddenly feels empty within. “Eh? Who was I talking to on the train...?” Even though he muttered to himself at the last seat of the classroom, nobody responded. Was it all a hallucination? But what was with the icy feeling left on the neck? Why did I buy an Afghan Shawl?

Fantasy and reality, truth and convictions cross in this psychological drama. What did he find in the 7th volume?

## Volume 8

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, and my female classmate who is my junior and a voice actress is returning to her hometown, so I decided to head for a space odyssey. It's fine, I'll launch from Tanegashima -- Time to Rocket-- >>

The protagonist was able to identify Nitadori, and knew of the truth she was hiding. She is the queen of the planet—the Second planet of the Arash galaxy Bennu Solar System, Sloatta. Once she regained her memories by changing the color of her left eye, she wanted to eat some horse sashimi from her native planet for breakfast, and suddenly returned home. As she returned, the countdown of the bomb to destroy Earth remains activated...

To get her back, the protagonist launched from Tanegashima, and flies towards space. The intense space chapter shall begin!

## Volume 9

<<I'm a High School Boy and a Bestselling Light Novel author, and I feel that it doesn't matter. I love you, I can't forget about you. I want to meet you. --Time to Love-- >>

After reuniting with Nitadori, the protagonist realizes the heavy feelings in his heart. He feels restless. In this situation, Nitadori, unable to eat enough horse sashimi, kicked up a fuss, became really big, and wants to swallow the entire world in 2 weeks. While the protagonist remains conflicted between the fate of the world and his first love, his smartphone receives a message from Earth. "The submission deadline has already passed. Are you done with the manuscript?"

The blazing love story shall begin. The 9th volume enters the climax!

## Volume 10

<<I'm a High School Boy. What do you want? --Time to Ask-- >> With convicted love and belief, the duo return to school. In this universe, nothing shall stop these two—right when the protagonist had such a thought, the homeroom teacher informed him of a startling fact, “I know you're busy saving the world out there, but you have insufficient attendance. You shall be expelled.”

But to continue being a 'high school boy', what shall the protagonist do? Also, what would be the truth to whatever Nitadori would launch in quick successions. Now comes the finale where the duo shall be tested!

**The aforementioned titles shall forever remain unreleased. Please do not inquire the bookstores or the editorial branch.**

**June 2014, Keiichi Sigsawa**

■こんにちは、黒星紅白です。  
あと描きは3巻連続でミークです。「男子高校生～」の挿絵は、  
首絞め系ヒロイン似鳥さんを描くことが多かったんで、  
あとがきくらいミーク描いてあげようというアレ...  
というかミーク描くの楽しい。  
ヴァイスヴァーサの話も読んでみたいですよね。



KUROBOSHI\_KOUHAKU

Hello everyone, this is Kouhaku Kuroboshi.

All three afterwords include Meek. In the 'Strangled' series, most of the illustrations involve the strangling heroine Nitadori, so I thought I should include some Meek in the afterwords...

I might as well say that it's enjoyable to draw Meek.

I want to read 'Vice Versa' too.